An Engaging Digital Curriculum for Intermediate Chinese Language and Culture

Final Report For Grant HAA-280982-21, Level I Digital Humanities Advancement Grant from National Endowment for the Humanities, Office of Digital Humanities

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This report can be read in conjunction with our website.

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SUMMARY: THE PROJECT'S GOALS AND PROCESS

In August 2021, we were privileged to receive a Level I Digital Humanities Advancement Grant (DHAG) from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), Office of Digital Humanities, to continue exploring our ideas on an engaging digital curriculum for Intermediate Chinese language and culture. This grant enabled us to bring together a panel of esteemed colleagues from different disciplines and to identify key aspects essential for the digital curriculum, which is the focus of this report. We hope that our work will build a foundation for the future of digital language and culture curricula, which are much needed in the transformational era, not only for less commonly taught languages such as Chinese but also for language and culture teaching in general.

Before receiving the grant, we experimented with our ideas to engage the Generation (Gen) Z in classrooms[1] who seem to have boundless opportunities to learn languages online thus are distracted: Youtube videos, edX, Coursera, Duolingo, Pleco, etc. While students' responses to our experiments were overwhelmingly positive, we are just a group of novices in teaching - the majority of us are in our 20s - who are curious about how digital innovation could bring students back to the classroom. We took the bold move to apply for the Level 1 DHAG, intending to present and test our ideas in front of experts in the fields.

Getting the grant was unexpected and encouraging. In January 2022, we gathered distinguished scholars and professors from diverse fields to give us feedback on our ideas, practices, and philosophy. The conference was held on Allegheny campus and on Zoom. The areas of expertise of the Advisory Board and conference presenters include language teaching and

[1] Our experiments began with changing textbooks to *Basic/Intermediate Mandarin Chinese*, edited by Professor Cornelius Kubler at Williams College. Funding came from Demmler Awards for Innovative Teaching, awarded by the Provost's Office at Allegheny College in 2018 and 2019, $2,500 and $3,500 respectively. The Provost Office also provided additional funding of $2,000 for Curriculum Review and Revision in 2018.

technology, Chinese curriculum design, cognitive processing of languages, intercultural communication, online courses design, German, Russian, digital pedagogy, instructional technology, learning games, etc. The diverse makeup was intentional: our goal was to create a digital curriculum that not only draws lessons from successfully implemented practices in curriculum design but adheres to, in scholarship, the developmental path in second language acquisition.

In addition to our team's presentations and teaching demos, conference participants contributed to discussions by giving presentations and participating in Q&A and roundtable discussions. It was a productive conference due to ideas presented from divergent fields. This report will focus on the findings that emerged from the conference by comparing them with ideas presented in our grant proposal, the initial stage of our endeavor. After that, we will present pathways for our Level II application. The congregation and collision of diverse thoughts also transformed our notion of digital curricula: we found that learners, or the era calls for digital language and culture curricula. An argument will be made in this regard when the report concludes with the impacts that our envisioned curriculum will make on the language and culture teaching field overall.

THE PROJECT'S OUTCOMES

Two themes emerged from conference discussions, thanks to the critical question raised: is critical thinking possible for Chinese at the Intermediate level when Chinese is deemed "exceptionally difficult for native English speakers" (Foreign Service Institute, n.d.) by the Department of State? To answer the question, our team envisions a more computationally challenging curriculum that utilizes games to learn and acquire vocabulary and grammar. While in our grant proposal, we conceptualized that our curriculum would leave mechanics of the language for learners to master by themselves with the help of digital materials, we did not really have a clear idea of how to realize it. It is worth noting that our technical support, who was an Allegheny undergraduate, showed us Minecraft games that reminded us that vocabulary can be learned in clusters when gaming, in an efficient and exciting way.

The other theme is language learning is social (Jin 2022)[2], which seems to contradict the nature of a digitized curriculum that warrants a considerable extent of self-study due to its simulation of the real life language learning environment. Nevertheless, it was Web 2.0 technology's power of facilitating, encouraging, and reinforcing communication, interactions, socialization, and collaboration that hooked us in our proposed curriculum. In keeping with the Advisory Board, our team concluded that encouraging socialization, or putting it in pedagogical terms, building a learning community intentionally, in class and after class, in real life and virtually, local, national, and/or even international, comprises one of the curriculum objectives.

After highlighting the above two heatedly debated themes at the conference, we will map out key concepts of our re-envisioned curriculum below, drawing feedback and comments from the conference discussions.

[2] To be published. Thanks to Professor Jin for sharing her scholarship with our team before publication.

1. Our Targeted Learners

DHAG supports “innovative, experimental, and/or computationally challenging digital projects” (Office of Digital Humanities, n.d.). Along these lines, we envision a language and culture curriculum for Gen Z who grew up surfing on the Internet, playing video games, using computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices, a generation who lives comfortably in the digital world. Research shows that Gen Z’s lifestyle “facilitates hypertext, interactivity, networking, random access and multitasking” (Ivanova and Ivanova 2009, IV. 2-3). They prefer learning that is “relevant, instantly useful and fun” (Ibid., IV. 2-4). Our curriculum intends to cater to Gen Z’s learning preferences so as to engage them.

We believe that college students’ growth and development in critical thinking and craving for content knowledge create a tension with what they learn at the Intermediate level, which to a large extent still focuses on everyday communication, particularly for less commonly taught languages. Meeting their needs on these two aspects thus challenging them cognitively and intellectually is another approach that our curriculum adopts to engage Gen Z.

2. Curriculum Objectives

Keeping our targeted learners' learning needs in mind, we crafted curriculum objectives in the table below.

Curriculum Objectives	
Language	**cultivate linguistic-social-cultural competence**
Content	**investigate contemporary trends, phenomena, and issues; develop disciplinary/interdisciplinary insights; nurture critical cultural awareness and global citizenship;**
Thinking	**facilitate critical thinking**
Socialization	**build a learning community**
by fostering the 21st century skills identified by the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE): "empowered learner, digital citizen, knowledge constructor, computational thinker, innovative designer, creative communicator, and global collaborator" (ISTE, 2009).	

Our curriculum objectives center on four aspects: language, content, critical thinking, and socialization. While language teachers have been working hard on developing learners' linguistic-social-cultural competence, content, critical thinking, and socialization are of increasing importance in our curriculum. The reasoning follows.

Nowadays many functions such as ordering food, booking rentals, calling cabs, or getting directions can be performed online or on Apps. For creating a curriculum for Gen Z, it indicates that 1) reading and typing would be more important for completing everyday communicative tasks; 2) along with transformations of daily lives, language learners' needs will also change. It is our projection that a curriculum that is content-driven and critical thinking-driven would satisfy the newly developed needs.

What makes a content-driven and critical thinking-driven curriculum possible is the online learning ecosystem[3] that learners are immersed in. In particular, there are many language self-learning tools available on the Internet. They are

1) almost unlimited language inputs (websites, Youtube, podcast, …);
2) online dictionaries and Apps (Pleco, Zhongwen-Chrome, Sogou...);
3) Apps and online courses (Duolingo, edX, coursera, ...);
4) self-check on the Internet by googling (matching Verb and Noun, …);
5) Google translator.

These tools are especially helpful for learners to acquire mechanical aspects of a language - vocabulary and grammar, which paves the way for a content-driven and critical thinking-driven curriculum.

To be more specific, in terms of content, our curriculum aims to
1) investigate contemporary trends, phenomena, and issues;
2) develop disciplinary/interdisciplinary insights;
3) nurture critical cultural awareness and global citizenship.

It frustrates us that many American students' impression of China is the China that was 30 years ago. We believe that some highlights of contemporary China accurately reflect the metamorphoses that this ancient civilization has undergone in the 21st century. Gen Z embraces real life applications more than ever, hence lack of correlation with their professional interests has hindered them from taking language courses. Tilting content towards their majors or minors would pique their interest. Language thus realizes its function in relation to learners' areas of expertise: a tool to engage in other disciplines. While scholars and teachers have been exploring how to nurture five C's in language classes - Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities, a

[3] There are different terms for this. In Professor Nada Dabbagh's research, it is called "Personal Learning Environment" (PLE). Dabbagh and Kitsantas, "Personal Learning Environments."

content-driven and critical thinking-driven curriculum makes it more feasible.

Encouraging socialization by building a learning community plays a key role for the success of the curriculum not only because meaning-making and acquiring language is done through social interaction (Glisan and Donato 2016, Chapter 1) but because Gen Z prefers to interact and network with others. Many enthusiastic teachers have been experimenting with it by engaging students in Wechat group chat or Snapshot. We envision a more intentional community building, in class and after class, in real life and virtually, local, national and/or even international.

While the curriculum is built on the fact that Gen Z is attuned with or even craves digital teaching and learning, it is the reality that some students are not necessarily skilled at student engagement tools/platforms or games; they also need help on using online dictionaries or Apps. It is important to bear in mind that students should spend meaningful time on language learning rather than being frustrated by technology. Nevertheless, training on how to use essential digital tools included in the curriculum might be necessary for the success of language learning. ISTE identified 21st century skills in 2009: “empowered learner, digital citizen, knowledge constructor, computational thinker, innovative designer, creative communicator, and global collaborator” (ISTE, 2009). Obtaining digital skills necessary for the success of the curriculum contributes to becoming a digital citizen in the 21st century.

3. Mapping out the Process to Achieve Curriculum Objectives

The major criticism that we received on our curriculum objectives was not with the objectives themselves but how to map out the process to achieve them. In response to the critique, we will lay out our blueprint below. It is by no means an exhaustive list but it is the direction that we will go. We are aware that in creating workflow and prototypes at Level II, more problems will come up and we will need to continue solving problems.

Credit is given to all conference participants. Their comments, feedback, and discussions impelled us to brush up and rethink our ideas in the grant proposal. We should mention that while we have come up with rough designs, examples are rudimentary and await further refinements at the Level II.

A. Module/Unit Objective: Solving a Problem or Completing a Project

We envision that our curriculum consists of several modules. Each module's final project is to solve a problem or complete a project, with tasks in Can-Do Statements (NCSSFL and ACTFL 2017) carried out and embedded in the end product. The final project could be a Padlet presentation, Website building, Poster sharing, a short film, or even real changes in life, etc. The rationale is to encourage creativity and innovation while catering to Gen Z's aspiration to make impacts on the world.

Using our team's presentation as examples, for the module on "Chinese Commercial Culture," the final project could be designing a market serving Asian immigrants or redesigning Chinatown. This project requires not only cross-cultural insights but comparison sentence structures and vocabularies on places, price, grocery, etc, all of which can be included in Can-Do Statements. Nevertheless, the ultimate goal of the project is for

students to exercise higher-order thinking - analyze, evaluate and create[4] - to develop something new hence make changes, at least in ideas. We direct the reader to this for the rough outline of the project.

We envision that each module comprises several units. The end product for each unit could also be solving a problem or completing a project. For instance, after the unit of "Travel in the Pandemic" in the Module "Pandemic," the project could be designing an itinerary and making a travel plan for a Chinese international student who is currently in Pittsburgh flying to Shanghai, China. To solve this real world problem, students not only need to surf Chinese flight booking sites but get familiar with health policies. Again, students are asked to exercise higher order thinking to solve real world problems.

B. Backward Design: Design Thinking

Because our curriculum is project-oriented, we will implement backward design[5]. Below are the steps that we will follow for each module/unit:

1. identify the topic that students are interested in discussing;
2. identify the final project that students are interested in pursuing;
3. identify Can-Do list necessary to complete project;
4. design pre-class activities and in-class activities leading to executing Can-Do list;
5. design the process of guiding students to complete and share project;

[4] According to Bloom's Taxonomy, remembering, understanding, and applying are lower-thinking skills whereas analyzing, evaluating, and creating belong to higher-order thinking skills. Armstrong, "Bloom's Taxonomy."

[5] Backward design considers learning goals and assessment first then plan learning activities. Bowen, "Understanding by Design."

6. support students to complete and share project;
7. assess project.

While 1-4 fall into the standard backward design model, 5-6 particularly tackle the open-endedness of completing a project. In the experiments we did in classrooms, individual students or groups chose different focuses to go about projects based on their interest[6]. On top of it, some self-directed non-formal learning[7] occurred in the process along with their chosen focus. A process will need to be mapped out carefully to ensure that non-formal learning and individualized support are effective.

In fact, design thinking[8] - putting our learners' needs as priority - is fused into every step of our curriculum design. It means that module/unit topics are selected to accommodate Gen Z's interests; materials presented are visually appealing and thought-provoking; projects are designed to excite learners; the process of completing projects is laid out in detail; guidance and support in completing projects carry the same weight as formal classes, since it could be thought less important due to its individualized feature, etc.

At Level II, we will research more on design thinking and see how it could inform our curriculum design.

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[6] See Allegheny College students' projects at https://xshi81.wixsite.com/my-site-1/students-projects. For instance, in response to the project "Design Activities for a Cultural Festival," students chose Mid-autumn Festival, Lantern Festival, Qingming Festival (Tomb Sweeping Festival), and Dragon Boat Festival.

[7] Non-formal learning is in between formal learning and informal learning. Dressman, "Introduction," 1-5.

[8] Design thinking, often referred to as human-centered design, is a problem-solving process with users' needs in mind in the whole process. Linke, "Design thinking, explained."

C. Module/Unit Topics: Engaging for Gen Z

If we were asked to use one word to describe the desired effect of our curriculum on Gen Z, it is engaging, which begins from the topics that we select as starting points for discussions. As stressed at the beginning, we will create a content-driven and critical thinking-driven curriculum pressed upon by the developmental stage of college students and facilitated by the many easily accessed language self-learning tools. The guidelines below discussing what topics to include might take some readers aback. We will address the suspicions on their compatibility with and feasibility for the Intermediate level later.

General guidelines on topics:

a. Chinese folklore stories/poetry (Butterfly Lovers, River Snow…)
b. contemporary phenomena (pandemic, Taiwan's 7-11, cashier-free market…)
c. Gen Z's concerns (phone anxiety, climate, health, environment, sustainability…)
d. Chinese commercial culture, Chinese popular culture and social media, Chinese high-tech…

"a" is included so that learners could share a bit of similar cultural backgrounds with native speakers, since these stories and poems are widely circulated and covered by K-12 Chinese textbooks. "b," "c," and "d" sometimes overlap but the idea is to present China as relevant and interesting for American students. As a general guideline, it is best to choose topics having significance to the American public and global landscape and reflecting unique cultural traditions. "a" and "b," "c," "d" do not necessarily detach from each other. It might be interesting to see cultural transformations by tying them together in the same module.

We will decide the specific topic for each module/unit at Level II.

D. Materials: Multimodal, Visually Appealing, and Thought-Provoking

Our curriculum's materials go beyond traditional texts. The formats encompass text, audio, visual, multimedia, infographic, etc. Hence the digital world comprises the main source:

a. Chinese podcast
b. Chinese shows/movies/video clips
c. social media posts/news/trending topics
d. websites (taobao, xiecheng - ctrip, baidu map, museums, mafengwo.cn, airbnb.cn, etc.)
e. Chinese learners' blogs/youtubes
f. news (from Greater China, BBC Chinese, NYT Chinese, etc.)

Although we attempt to simulate the real life learning environment by stimulating learners' auditory and visual senses, we value texts written in standard Chinese and of aesthetic merits. Inundated by multimedia, this point cannot be emphasized enough to preserve roots and essence of Chinese culture.

We direct the reader to this and this for presenting materials in a visually appealing and thought-provoking way. Our intention is to ease memorization of vocabulary. We will employ every possible strategy to tackle mechanical aspects of language, starting from presentations by using design tools such as Canva. Learning games is another way to help.

E. Learning and Acquiring Vocabulary and Grammar through Games

Acquiring vocabulary and grammar has always been the greatest difficulty for native English speakers, which leaves the reader understandably suspicious of the curriculum's compatibility with and feasibility for the

Intermediate level. At the conference, we were enlightened by our technical support that games have great potential to take on the problem.

In second language acquisition, the same category of vocabularies such as those for color, appearance, furniture, etc. can be learned in clusters. Our technical support showed us Minecraft games that are conducive for this type of learning. We will research more on this aspect at Level II.

We direct the reader to this on possible learning games for grammar. By visually breaking down the sequence of actions, it is easier to grasp that location goes before verbs when giving directions. However, as one Board member pointed out, it lacks gaming factors: rewards and upgrades. We will research more on games at Level II.

Similar to Quizlet, we plan to put games in pre-class activities. We hope that it will tremendously alleviate the burden of learning and acquiring mechanical aspects of the Chinese language.

F. Pre-class Activities: "Edit the Task, Not the Text"

Flipping the classroom (Brame, n.d.) is now a commonly accepted teaching practice; it is for the best use of class time on activities that involve higher order thinking. Considerable amount of time will be devoted to designing pre-class activities to prepare students for in-class discussions. Interactivity is the key to engaging learners before class. We direct the reader to this and this for interactive activities that we designed by using student engagement tools Edpuzzle and Perusall.

Multimodal presentation and student engagement tools/platforms furnish instruments to realize "edit the task, not the text" (Glisan and Donato 2016, Chapter 3), with less confusion about authentic materials on the part of

learners. Both tools achieve the effect by providing visuals and contexts that are essential for meaning-making.

In our curriculum, “edit the task, not the text” applies to any reading activities. For instance, to complete a module/unit project after class, students need to surf original Chinese websites. However, they do not have to understand everything there; they only need to retrieve and understand the information relevant to the project.

“Edit the task, not the text” also helps tone down the difficulty of course materials. Topics listed in section “C” might seem profound, yet it really depends on how we use the materials to suit students’ linguistic level. We will be careful when designing projects/tasks, taking students’ language level into serious consideration.

G. In-class Activities (1): Instructor Demonstrating and Coaching How to Use Vocabulary and Grammar to Analyze, Evaluate and Create

In Chinese classrooms, students practice to complete communicative tasks. While tasks often focus on everyday functions, levels of thinking are usually at remembering, understanding, and applying, which are categorized as lower-order thinking skills in Bloom’s Taxonomy. As emphasized at the beginning, cognitive and intellectual development of college students demand more challenging undertakings. Moreover, pre-class activities employ every possible strategy including multimodal representations, student engagement tools/platforms, learning games, etc. to equip students with necessary language skills. It is not unrealistic to engage students in higher-order thinking activities such as analyzing, evaluating, and creating.

We direct the reader to this for an example of how an instructor could demonstrate and coach learners to utilize vocabulary and sentence structures to analyze, evaluate, and create. Note that the goal of the class is to solve a problem: How could you reduce your phone anxiety?

It was a 200-level class, starting with the instructor describing her anxiety symptoms before, when, and after making phone calls. Students then followed her examples to describe their own anxiety symptoms, while practicing sentence structures - dǎ diànhuà qián (before making phone calls), dǎ diànhuà shí (when making phone calls), and dǎ diànhuà hòu (after making phone calls) - and vocabularies related to symptoms. They were encouraged to look up online dictionaries to tell their real life situations.

Instructor then asked a global question “Do you think that Gen Z is more likely to have phone anxiety?” to propel students to think beyond personal experiences, even though it is at the Advanced level that students are expected to do so. A student was able to answer the question: yes because previous generations could not text and could only call. This is a very interesting phenomenon for us because it shows that students can speak about matters of public and community interest at the Intermediate level. We believe that there are two reasons for that:

1) Students’ cognitive ability is there;
2) This student has mastered sentence structure necessary to analyze (or evaluate) the situation: yīnwéi + Subject + (bù) néng + Verb + Noun. The only thing that she might be lacking is vocabulary: shàngyíbèi (subject: previous generations) and fā duǎnxìn (verb+noun: send texts), for which she could look up in dictionaries right away or ask the instructor.

Next, the instructor asked a “Why” question to push students to analyze and evaluate further: why is there phone anxiety? Answers to this question helped formulate solutions to the problem. By answering the last question “how to reduce phone anxiety,” the class successfully brainstormed

solutions while exercising higher-order thinking skills: analyze, evaluate and create.

This teaching demo shows that by asking “What,” “Why,” and “How” questions, students are able to carry out cultural analyses and higher-order critical thinking - the hallmark of the humanities - in language classes. Nevertheless, legitimate questions were raised on this teaching demo. They were

1) Students did not speak as much as in traditional classrooms;
2) How to make sure the vocabularies that students looked up stick?

These two questions concern language whereas the goal of the class is cultural analysis and critical thinking. However, they are legitimate because language is the basis for the goals. We want to point out that there would be various interactive activities on key vocabulary and grammar in pre-class assignments to gear students up. Importantly, the instructor's demonstration shows how to use those key vocabulary and grammar in context because it revolves around a central theme. Contextualizing is much needed in the curriculum since students heavily rely on self-learning tools to learn mechanical aspects of the language. Students’ subsequent practice of language are thus more relatable and meaningful due to the contextualization and central theme. Also, it is not a speaking class per se; instead, it is a class to create solutions by brainstorming in which speaking and writing are forms of communication.

H. In-class Activities (2): Students Practice Language While Developing Critical Cultural Awareness

We intend to have students practice speaking a lot in class. However, just as in the above example, practice should be done in context and aims at

content/critical thinking development. We provide an in-class activity model for practicing language while developing critical cultural awareness here.

The idea is to practice vocabulary on body parts, appearance, clothes, occupation, and hobbies in the context of gender issues. It is interesting because it touches upon fluid gender identity, an emerging phenomenon in contemporary China. By tying it with crossing-dressing in Chinese folklore story *Butterfly Love*, cultural discussions afterwards could add historical depth and complexity.

Developing critical cultural awareness has "rarely been explored" in Chinese teaching (Wang 2017, 24). This model was inspired by German teaching (Meredith, Geyer and Wagner 2018). As we continue experimenting with other possible models for in-class activities, we will carry forward our open-mindedness and creativity.

I. In-class Activities (3): Students Practice Language While Developing Disciplinary/Interdisciplinary Insights

We do not want some students to think that language has nothing to do with science or social science that they major or minor in. This is not the truth, fundamentally. At the Intermediate level, we believe that it is appropriate to coach students to read data, in the simplest way possible. Again, it should be done for a purpose. It might be interesting to compare the death rate in the first month between the U.S. and China during the pandemic, dig out why, draw lessons from it, then go from there to discuss how both countries can do better. By contrast, it might not be fun just to ask students to go over statistics. A purpose always gives learners the feelings of what they do is relevant and meaningful thus motivates them. We direct the reader to this for our rudimentary idea for this in-class activity model.

We will brainstorm how language could relate to other Gen Z's interest areas such as environment, sustainability, or climate. We might need help from professors teaching these courses in college.

J. After-class Activities: Non-formal and Informal Learning

In section "A," we gave examples of real-world problems or projects that students would find relevant and interesting. Again, engagement is what we look for. Before designing projects or giving out problems, it is important to know about targeted learners' interests so they are motivated to engage.

We value non-formal and informal learning that occur in the process of completing a project. To support learners to grow into self-directed and lifelong learners, we encourage them to save new vocabulary in AnKi, a program that makes remembering things easy. In addition, students' mastery of grammar is strengthened as the instructor gives individualized support. Again, students are encouraged to save grammar points that they have difficulties with in AnKi and review them whenever they would like.

Many projects will be done through student engagement tools or website building programs such as Padlet, Voicethread, my.bulbapp.com, etc. As one conference presenter pointed out, learners should not struggle with technology. Indeed, it is frustrating if students spend more time on figuring out technology than learning language. We intend to use tools that are easy to use, students are familiar with, or need the least time to train, if at all. There will be careful selections of certain tools at Level II. In our curriculum, technology serves pedagogy, not the other way around.

K. Assessment: Summative and Formative

Assessment was a missing part in our grant proposal, which was another major critique received from the Advisory Board. A Board member's presentation on "Digital Projects and Digital Portfolios for Assessing Students Language Proficiency" (Klimova 2022) gave us the idea on where we will go. In retrospect, it seems logical that assessment should be built on the end product, since our curriculum is project-oriented.

We envision a combination of summative assessment and formative assessment. Formative assessment is highlighted because our curriculum promotes learners' motivation and agency. In particular, open-ended projects encourage students to self-direct their learning. With non-formal and informal learning going into the completion of projects, formative assessment is a sound choice to fuel learning, taking advantage of the online learning ecosystem available for students.

At Level II, we will do more research on summative and formative assessment so as to make up this missing piece in our initial proposal.

L. Socialization: Intentionally Building a Learning Community

Many teachers have been working hard on facilitating conversations in Wechat groups or Snapshot or other Apps. Done on social media platforms and in real life, this type of communication is more real for students. In fact, it is a more efficient way to learn language and writing courtesy because students can emulate teachers' writing in real time - non-formal and informal learning occur thanks to students' cognitive abilities. We believe that it makes sense to treat it as a type of formal assignment.

Social media and student engagement tools help build a learning community virtually. In real life, group projects such as making a short film, performing a play or even making cultural foods together are ideal to introduce at the beginning of a course to form bonds between students. Socialization within the group goes more smoothly later. Or a group project talking to a restaurant owner about the menu and translating it more elegantly would develop the bond further. However, it is always a concern if students would speak the target language when doing these group projects together. We will strategize ways to make rules that work.

There are other creative ways to build learning communities such as facilitating communications and forming communities between American students and Chinese international students, by working with other offices on campus. Or establishing relationships between American students and native speakers abroad. By forming these communities, we aim for non-formal and informal learning. Our curriculum intentionally incorporates non-formal and informal learning into our design to cultivate habits for lifelong learning.

M. The Learning Platform: Canvas or Inventing a New One?

We could use Canvas as our learning management system since it is handy and some student engagement tools can be embedded. However, as we researched further, we found that Canvas is not necessarily conducive to language and culture learning for two main reasons:

1) there are limited font choices for Chinese which is a problem due to the weight that calligraphy has in Chinese culture;
2) some apps are not embeddable. Users have to open extra tabs to participate in activities hence interactivity becomes formality

whereas interactivity is the key when using student engagement tools.

Our ideal learning platform has these features: All in One (all tools that we choose to use are embeddable), Support Multiple Languages, Support Multimedia, Flexible Layout, Mobile Friendly, Security, Accessibility, and Interactivity. We direct the read to this for more detailed explanations.

At Level II, we will first decide what tools or apps to include. Then we will gauge if Canvas can realize our desired functions. If not, we will consider revising Canvas or inventing a learning platform particularly for language and culture learning.

N. Accessibility: The Design of the Curriculum Accommodating Disabilities

According to the CDC, 1 out of 4 adults in the US lives with a disability (CDC, n.d.). The number could be higher in reality. We researched what font faces, font size, and what kinds of alignment are more legible for dyslexia. For color blindness, it is better to use textures and patterns to show contrast than using colors; it also works better to underline to differentiate. We direct the reader to this for more detailed explanations.

We cannot accommodate all disabilities and sometimes a solution to one disability causes trouble for another. However, we will accommodate disabilities that affect users the most. Not only that, everyone will benefit from an accessible design. At Level II, we will write a pamphlet to guide the design of our curriculum.

O. Licensing, Copyright, and Privacy

Our curriculum is open-access hence we will apply a Creative Common license for our work. In terms of copyright, since our curriculum's materials will come from the online world, we will use content that is in the public domain or has a public copyright license. Google search is the easiest way to find public domain content; CreativeCommons maintains a catalog of its content at https://wordpress.org/openverse/. We do not need to worry about using many Youtube videos, as "by linking to or embedding YouTube videos on your course site, you aren't infringing on copyright" (Oregon State University 2020). Youtube is a great source for multimodal presentations.

Our research shows that student engagement tools can be easily integrated with our Learning Platform using apps, LTI (IMS, n.d.), embedding, or URL links while respecting their policies on privacy. Usually they are FERPA for the U.S. (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.), COPPA for children under 16 in the U.S. (Federal Trade Commission, n.d.), GDPR for the European Union (GDPR.EU, n.d.), or appropriate privacy laws for the country where our curriculum will be used. We direct the reader to this for more detailed explanations.

P. Dissemination

That our team, Advisory Board and conference presenters came from various schools indicates the broad interest in our project and possibility of spreading our ideas to these schools. What we did for dissemination included a presentation by our Project Director at GLCA (Great Lakes Colleges Association) Chinese Faculty Meetings on April 23, 2022 in Ann Arbor, MI.

We as a team presented virtually at the 2022 Chinese Language Teachers Association Annual Conference on April 10th, 2022. One attendee asked if we could share our course materials with her. This can be easily done since currently our materials are on Canvas. In Canvas, users can share resources to Commons then other users can import them into their own courses. We shared our course materials to Commons, which will benefit any other users who happen to see our materials on Canvas and are interested in using them.

We planned to present at the ACTFL conference, since our project intends to make broad impacts on the language and culture teaching field overall. Unfortunately, we missed the deadline. We are contemplating the possibility to sign up for the conference in 2023 beyond the project period.

WHAT OUR CURRICULUM WILL LOOK LIKE

It might be clearer if we provide the rough outline of what our envisioned curriculum will look like. It is the foundation on which we are moving forward. Please refer to the section of “What Our Curriculum Will Look Like” under “Pathways to Level II” on our website for Pre-class activities, In-class activities, and After-class activities. Please note that they are not for the same topic; we will decide the topic for a model module at Level II.

There are issues or concepts that have to be understood thoroughly before proceeding to create workflow and prototypes including the model module at the Level II. They are:

1. Can-Do Statements by the ACTFL, particularly at the Intermediate Level
2. Design Thinking
3. (Minecraft) Games
4. Edit the Task, not the Text
5. Student Engagement Tools/Platforms; decide what to include in the curriculum
6. Intercultural Citizenship
7. Is Canvas sufficient as the Learning Platform? If not, what to do?
8. A pamphlet on the design for the purpose of accessibility
9. Reaffirmation of copyright and privacy on student engagement tools

Some could be done as reading activities for our team like 1, 2, 4, 6. For some we could convene a workshop led by one of us like 3, 5 or we might need to seek outside workshops given by experts like 3, 5, 7. While 8 and 9 could be done by our team, for now we are not sure if we should look for outside reviewers.

If it is so demanded, we will consider adding team members to strengthen some areas, for example, games.

AFTERTHOUGHTS: IMPACTS OF OUR CURRICULUM

Language study is distinctively different from other disciplines on college campuses in that somehow it can be learnt by immersion. With the online world providing similarly immersive environments, it faces greater challenges in terms of enrollment. The resistance against a digital language and culture curriculum not only comes from generational gap between instructors and students but from misperception that digital learning would take away language classes. It is true that digitalization promotes self-directed learning (Morris and Rohs 2021). However, as one of the major themes at our conference indicates, language learning is social. Peers congregating together on college campuses furnishes the most conductive environment for socialization, which is the key for meaning-making, acquiring language, and exchanging ideas and opinions. By incorporating Youtube videos, student engagement tools, online dictionaries or apps, games, etc. that are easily accessed by Gen Z, our curriculum not only recognizes the online learning ecosystem as being part of this generation's lived experiences but encourages and supports self-learning.

A content-driven and critical thinking-driven curriculum can be readily used to cultivate students' world-readiness: Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities, with language as a tool. The difficulty of mastery of vocabulary and grammar in the language can be immensely eased by employing digital tools. Class time will be then spent on giving feedback, modeling in context, exercising higher-order thinking skills, and solving problems.

Online learning ecosystem provides boundless opportunities for self-learning. To prepare students for their lifelong learning, our curriculum nurtures habits on non-formal and informal learning through formative assessment that will benefit their lifetime.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: references

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Appendix 2: grant proposal narrative:

An Engaging Digital Curriculum for Intermediate Chinese Language and Culture

Allegheny College

Enhancing the Humanities

Language is a system of sounds and words "by means of which human beings, as members of a social group and participants in its culture" communicate and express themselves (Robins, Britannica.com). Enhancing students' communicative competence has been language professors' primary goal, by progressing in pedagogy from form-focused method to task-based to content- and project-based. For Chinese, it has always been a struggle because Chinese shares few cognates with English and has its distinctively different culture. Web 2.0 technology, due to its power to facilitate, encourage, and reinforce communication, interactions, socialization, and collaboration, affords opportunities to accomplish the goal by advancing a pedagogical shift. Although research on utilizing authentic multimodal presentations (Zhang 2019), online learning engagement tools/platforms (Valdebenito and Chen 2019; Lai 2017), or social media (Luo 2016) to teach Chinese and other languages and cultures has been emerging, currently no language curriculum focuses on taking up opportunities afforded by the Web 2.0 to explore ways to improve communicative competence and develop critical cultural awareness. A 12-month Level 1 grant to Allegheny College will enable us to undertake this endeavor.

Our curriculum aims to offer college instructors and college-age students a powerful open-access platform that makes Chinese learning interactive and engaging. We will achieve it by offering multimedia and image-rich environments, developing interactive and reciprocal activities, and linking them to cultural analyses and critical thinking, the hallmark of the humanities.

With the Level 1 grant, we will be able to examine three critical questions by convening a conference gathering comments and feedback on experiments and innovations we have made in classrooms:

1. How will we accommodate the increasingly digital-dependent life to create a curriculum that nurtures the 21st century skills identified by the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE): empowered learner, digital citizen, knowledge constructor, computational thinker, innovative designer, creative communicator, and global collaborator (ISTE, 2019)?
2. Even though multimedia/online materials and online learning tools/platforms are overflowing, how will we select pedagogically sound tools and develop authentic activities (Herrington, Oliver and Reeves 2003, 62-63) to build an interactive, social, and collaborative learning environment? Our students learned to make purchases on Chinese online shopping platforms and to create travel itineraries on Padlet by searching Baidu

maps and Chinese tourism websites. Possible activities would include surfing Chinese learning games or making culturally appropriate memes.

3. What activities could we create to develop learners' critical cultural awareness? Although this question has begun to draw attention in the field of Chinese teaching, it has "rarely been explored" (Wang 2017, 24). With the help of Web 2.0, content-based learning and higher order thinking (Bloom's Taxonomy, learningcenter.unc.edu) exercises can be realized in a language classroom. For instance, by presenting authentic, immersive cultural materials available on YouTube and examining them utilizing online engagement tools/platforms, we can deliberately plan scaffolding support activities for learners to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate (Ibid.), hence gaining intercultural insights. Taking as an example an experiment that we conducted, to help students develop the cultural sensitivity that Chinese people tend to speak subtly and tactfully, we first presented an interesting YouTube video, then guided students in analyzing it, using Edpuzzle as an interactive learning tool.

We propose a curriculum for the Intermediate level because there are unique challenges to be addressed for the Beginning level: tones and character recognition (Zhang 2020, 498-99). Even without these two challenges, our adventure is daunting as we imagine a fundamentally different way to teach languages. It focuses on facilitating communications and critical thinking among learners by a well-planned process using Web 2.0 technology as a powerful learning tool, leaving mechanical aspects of a language to learners to master themselves with the help of digital course materials (Wu 2016). We thus intend to bring about a paradigmatic shift in language teaching: creating an immersive learning environment by pulling in rich resources from the online world; engaging learners by utilizing online engagement tools/platforms and social media; developing critical cultural awareness by taking advantage of the immersion and engagement that we create. This digital Chinese curriculum will serve as a model for curriculum design not only for other less commonly taught languages but also for language and culture teaching as a whole. A Level 1 grant will support us to test our ideas before established scholars and revise them accordingly.

Environmental Scan

Although rare, digital language curricula exist, among which some are not open-access: *Horizons* for French, for instance. Among open-source ones, *Mi idioma, mi comunidad: español para bilingües* at https://ohiostate.pressbooks.pub/idiomacomunidad/ is for Spanish; *Grenzenlos Deutsch: an Inclusive Curriculum for German Studies* at https://grenzenlos-deutsch.com/umwelt/ is for German and still under construction; and on www.edx.org and www.coursera.org, Chinese curricula created by MIT, Peking University, Qinghua University, or MandarinX are available free if one does not want a certificate.

The commonalities among these open-access digital language curricula are: 1) they make use of pictures and videos, among which videos of MIT's curriculum at https://www.edx.org/course/chinese-language-in-culture-level-1 are well-made and of high quality; and 2) they create quizzes. Whereas Chinese quizzes mainly check comprehension of materials, quizzes for German or Spanish are interactive. In addition, *Grenzenlos Deutsch* provides lists of German movies and music as supplementary materials, and *Mi idioma, mi comunidad* assigns a project for students to do after each chapter. Chinese curricula demonstrate

the efforts to incorporate authentic online materials and to establish a learning community. For instance, Qinghua University's curriculum includes a YouTube video presenting Hutong culture in Beijing, while MIT and Peking University run a forum.

Our curriculum will build upon the above-mentioned curricula's undertakings and go further. First, we utilize resources online such as shopping websites or tourism websites, particularly multimodal presentations of cultural materials, to build an immersive learning environment. Second, we engage students by employing engagement tools/platforms such as Poll Everywhere, Edpuzzle, Mentimeter, Padlet, Voicethread, Perusall, or Slack, to name a few, leaving interactive quizzes for learners to complete themselves. Third, we establish a learning community by assigning digital or real-life projects. These projects solve real-world problems, and learners are encouraged to set the learning agenda based on their own interest. Last but not the least, by investigating topics or completing projects that matter, learners not only acquire language as a communicative and cognitive tool, but also procure knowledge and skills from peers that reach beyond language learning. Hence, the learning process transfers learners into co-producers of content (Dabbagh and Kitsantas 2012, 3) and contributors to creating knowledge (Scardamalia and Carl 1993), thus active agents (Bada 2015), in the digital world, or the learners possibly make impacts in the real world.

History of the Project

The launch of our project benefited from two Demmler Awards for Innovative Teaching from Allegheny College in the summers of 2018 and 2019. We revised our curriculum, utilizing visuals and animation to facilitate language practice and creating online games using Kahoot and Nearpod to motivate students (Appendix 8). Through the process, we realized the power of image, multimedia, and games to create a dynamic classroom.

In the Fall of 2020, as the College moved to the Canvas learning management system, we have been seeking: 1) to make class interactive by embedding interactive online engagement tools such as Poll Everywhere, Mentimeter, and Edpuzzle; 2) to make students' learning relevant, useful, and fun by implementing project-based assessment such as having students make Padlets, create a short film or build a webpage; and 3) to explore better ways to infuse cultural analyses and critical thinking into a language course (Appendix 5 and 8). It has been a successful semester as students' responses to the experiences have been overwhelmingly positive (Appendix 4).

We have successfully experimented with two models to develop students' critical-thinking skills, the hallmark of the humanities. One is to present contemporary, real-world multimedia/online materials and then facilitate students to analyze and compare by making use of infographic tools such as Canva or Piktochart. The materials are about cultures or topics students are fascinated with, and the infographics visually encourage students to think critically (Appendix 8).

It has been particularly challenging to give content-based instruction in Chinese due to the difficulty level of the language, whereas other languages such as German and Spanish have been progressing on this aspect (Meredith, Geyer, and Wagner 2018; Byram, Perugird and Wager 2016). We developed a class with the theme of "phone anxiety" after the chapter on "making phone calls." In the class, we held an interactive activity by using Poll Everywhere and provided scaffolding such as sentence starters, pictures or infographics, making it easier for students to

process, think, talk, and write (Appendix 8). This adventure is illuminating. We feel that we are on the verge of creating another model that integrates theme-based instruction into a language class while challenging students' linguistic, intellectual, and cognitive abilities.

Our experiments and innovations have been run inside Allegheny College. It is time for us to present our work to the field; hear about comments and feedback from experts; and revise and scale up the project in the hope of engendering a paradigm shift in language pedagogy. The Level 1 grant will help us with this: bringing together professionals on languages and digital humanities; brainstorming; and working collaboratively to devise an engaging digital curriculum.

Activities and Project Team

We plan to convene a conference on January 12-14, 2022 to invite comments and feedback on our work. The theme would be "how shall we accommodate the increasingly digital-dependent life and take advantage of Web 2.0 technology to create a language curriculum that nurtures 21st century skills?" At the conference, we will present, give teaching demos, and collect comments and feedback. We have invited seven scholars specifically working on the relevant areas to serve on the Advisory Board, and they are committed to serving. In addition, three conference presenters will demonstrate their teaching practices pertinent to the theme (Appendix 2/Attachment 8).

After collecting comments and feedback, we will write a white paper delineating if, why, and how our proposed curriculum will achieve its claimed goal. The white paper will be evaluated by the Advisory Board.

Mainly composed of creative young people who are fascinated with utilizing technology to advance pedagogical innovations, our team is led by a tenured professor, Dr. Xiaoling Shi, in Chinese Language and Culture. While Prof. Shi and Runqi Deng are experimenting in classrooms, Kaidi Chen and Chih-Jung Chen are pursuing degrees in Applied Linguistics and Human-Computer Interaction, respectively, after working at Allegheny College for two years, providing their insights on the cutting-edge research on pedagogical developments and technology. Their stipends are paid with the grant-requested funds.

K Chen and Deng are making a career in Chinese teaching; therefore, this project is greatly beneficial for their future career. As a master's student in computer science, C-J Chen will have the opportunity to use what she has learnt from school to develop a website and think through or even design a digital platform that could realize the functions that we imagine for independent learners. If one of our team members is unable to complete her/his commitment to the project because of COVID-related changes or other unexpected circumstances, we will find another team member at the University of Pittsburgh or Carnegie Mellon University. We have contacts at these schools, which are only 90 minutes away from Allegheny.

A librarian, Mr. Brain Kern, from Allegheny College is also on our team. We will consult him on issues related to data management, copyright, and licensing.

Final Product and Dissemination

The final product of our Level 1 grant will be the white paper and a website built in the summer of 2022, which will include 1) our above-mentioned white paper; and 2) our teaching demos, lesson plans, reports, and students' responses to classroom experiences. The website will be an ongoing project: we will update it whenever we develop new ideas for effective implementation.

By the summer of 2022, we should have a clear idea if we could move forward to apply for the Level 2 grant to support the development of sample models, prototypes, and workflows for the curriculum. Although a planning grant carries risks because of its exploratory nature, we are confident that our project will be successful, because our initial efforts, supported with internal Demmler grants, have provided a strong foundation for our work, and our innovations received overwhelmingly positive feedback from our students (Appendix 8 and 4). We also hope to extend this work by beginning to work on tones and character recognition for Beginning Chinese in the fall of 2021, building on the experience we plan to gain with Intermediate Chinese.

We plan to disseminate our work through presentations at MLA (Modern Language Association) and CLTA (Chinese Language Teachers' Association) conferences. We will also convene a Zoom meeting among Chinese language professors working for GLCA (the Great Lake Colleges Association consortium of 13 colleges, of which Allegheny is a member) to introduce and demonstrate our plans. And, as we talk about taking advantage of Web 2.0, we will also promote our ideas, teaching demos, and reports on social media such as Facebook.

Appendix 3: Advisory Board and conference presenters

Advisory Board (in alphabetical order):

Dr. Nada Dabbagh, George Mason University

Dr. Hong Gang Jin, Hamilton College

Dr. Olga Klimova, University of Pittsburgh

Dr. Cornelius Kubler, Co-chair, Williams College

Dr. Haohsiang Liao, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Dr. Shijuan Liu, Chair, Indiana University of Pennsylvanian

Dr. Manuela Wagner, University of Connecticut

Dr. Debao Xu, Hamilton College

Conference Presenters (in alphabetical order):

Yalin Chen, Smith College

Dr. Xiaofei Tang, Carnegie Mellon University

Mario Valdebenito Rodas, University of Massachusetts Amherst

Appendix 4: presentations at the conference

By grant project team

Dr. Xiaoling Shi, Allegheny College

1. “The BluePrint: An Engaging Open-access Digital Language and Culture Curriculum”
2. Teaching demo: a speaking class
3. Teaching demo: a reading/writing class
4. Final remarks from the project team

Kaidi Chen, Ph.D. candidate, University of Connecticut

1. “Cross-dressing and Gender Inequality in Butterfly Lovers: A Chinese Folklore Story”
2. “Data, Masking, Lockdown, and Double Standards? - Teaching Intercultural Citizenship and Social Justice at the Intermediate Chinese Class”

Chih-Jung Chen, Master of Science, Rochester Institute of Technology

1. “The Platform for Our Engaging Open-access Language and Culture Digital Curriculum”
2. “Accessible Design to Empower Disabled Learners in Our Digital Language and Culture Curriculum”

Runqi Deng, Master of Arts, University of Pittsburgh

1. “Evolving: Design, Interactivity, Social Humanities and Web 2.0 Technology”
2. Teaching demo: “Phone Anxiety”

Brian Kern, Director of Resource Management, Library and Information Technology Services, Allegheny College

1. “Using Online Engagement Tools/Platforms in an Open-access Digital Curriculum - Copyright / Licensing, Privacy, & Sustainability”

By Advisory Board

Dr. Nada Dabbagh, “Personal Learning Environments (PLEs) as Digital Learning Ecosystems”

Dr. Hong Gang Jin, “Incorporating Neurocognitive-based Social L2 Learning in CFL Online Instruction”

Dr. Olga Klimova, “Digital Projects and Digital Portfolios for Assessing Students' Language Proficiency”

Dr. Cornelius Kubler, “Chinese Language Teaching and the New Educational Technology”

Dr. Haohsiang Liao, “Meet Our Global Learners: MITx - Chinese Language in Culture”

Dr. Shijuan Liu, “Integration of Formal, Informal, and Non-formal Language Learning in 2020s with Technologies”

Dr. Manuela Wagner, “The Development of Intercultural Citizenship through Language Education”

By conference presenters

Yalin Chen, “Food for Thought - Blending Culture and Technology in Chinese Courses”

Dr. Xiaofei Tang, “Using Scenario-based Digital Games in Chinese Classes”

Mario Valdebenito Rodas, “Creating Language Acquisition Pathways through Educational Technology Applications and Active Learning”