Technology's Promise: Online or Face-to-Face, the Language is Yours!

In the summer of 2017 I offered an online Italian intensive beginners course. As I considered the pros and cons of online teaching while creating this class, I pondered on activities and teaching strategies for an online environment. I realized that technology would allow me to offer a well-structured and balanced online class, just as much as it does in a face-to-face environment. I kept in mind my goal, which is always to give students an opportunity to learn in realistic and relevant environments. I achieve this by using lots of videos, readings, and discussion, that lead students to create their own videos and presentations in which they act, interact, or perform on a given topic. Examples are a skype interview with a CEO of an Italian olive oil company; or studying ecology and environment, presenting on 0% waste, ecological furniture, or addressing the Mayor of Naples to solve the garbage issue; c) discussing cuisine, learning about the culture of a specific region, and having students use certain ingredients as they prepare a recipe, all recorded and presented to the class. My objective is for students to consider multiple perspectives on specific topics and develop cultural understanding; to be engaged as they learn; to experience the culture through multiple modes of representation; to collaborate on project work to build reading and writing skills and increase speaking fluency through practice; and to improve reading comprehension. Therefore, as I sorted my ideas, I pushed back against what sociology professors Angela C. Garcia, Alecea I. Standlee, and Jennifer Bechkoff call "[…] a common misconception that we often see an online communication as somehow inferior, and that an amount of "compensating" is necessary to make up for the absence of a classroom and the regular human, social aspects of interaction, rather than seeing the differing contexts of physical and online environments simply as different communicative modes of one lifeworld." (83) The result was tremendously successful, and I'd like to share my resources to maintain that real language learning environment, both in an online and face-to-face classroom, with material that helps students see and feel the language, and really live it.

I can still hear my Italian Literature professor in College tell his students that if he was not able to stimulate the inner child in us through collaborative class work, he was doing a bad job. Those words have resonated throughout my career as a language instructor, although I recognize that methodologies back in my college years were a lot different. They included a lot of simplistic tasks based on the professor's input, and we certainly did not have access to technology as we do today. The inner child wants to have fun, right? Fun does not mean an easy class. It means engagement, involvement, and repetition with a twist, as well as experiential learning [1], which is how modern pedagogies like to call task-oriented learning. Everyone knows that successful technology integration in a language classroom consists in the use of social media platforms and networks, smartphones and tablets, software applications, the internet etc. I use social media to post status updates as a class; write blog posts about what students are learning; connect to other classrooms, even abroad; I use YouTube for students to host a show, prepare a video, or show a podcast; and to create accounts for special interest projects. Successful technology integration is achieved when the use of technology is routine and transparent; accessible and readily available for the task at hand; supporting the curricular goals, and helping the students to effectively reach

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[1] Experiential learning consists in gaining knowledge through experiences which allow students to collect and reflect on primary data and engage in problem solving. It includes various stages: a concrete experience, reflecting upon it, abstract conceptualization (analysis and generating conclusions or new ideas), and active application of the lessons drawn from the experience. (Bunse, Simon, Bunker, Sarah, McDermot, Michael- TLISI 2018: Experiential (Service) Learning: Action Labs - May 23, 2018)

their goals. The Edutopia website of the George Lucas Educational Foundation, founded by innovative and award-winning film-maker George Lucas, states: "When technology integration is at its best, a child or a teacher doesn't stop to think that he or she is using a technology tool -- it is second nature. And students are often more actively engaged in projects when technology tools are a seamless part of the learning process." I believe this, provided that we keep in mind that our goal is not to offer technology integrated classes for the sake of technology: something boring on paper is still boring on a tablet or a laptop.

Educator Malcom S. Knowles, in his book *The Adult Learner: A Neglected Species*, says: "As a college faculty member, applying andragogical (also known as adult learning theory) principles can be critical in effectiveness as an educator of adults. Adult learners have unique instructional needs to be met, expectations to fulfill, and barriers to overcome." (8) In 1973 he argues that instruction for college students should be task-oriented, just like for kids, where learning activities should be in the context of common tasks, although adults must be treated differently. [2] Reading Knowles makes me realize how we are reinventing hot water, seeking to re-establish that active learning is key. In my opinion, especially when it comes to teaching a foreign language, there is so much we can teach and learn through technology, and apply to our classrooms, to ensure that tasks are meaningful, involving, and have some kind of useful impact and outcome. That said, language instructors need to rethink their strategies even further because we are in the era of online classes that are becoming more and more popular and in demand. There is worry about the loss of a face-to-face environment, that allows room for improvisation and total collaboration. However, even an online classroom has so much room for incredibly engaging oral activities, collaborative projects, and synchronous communication. My goal in this article is to establish a relationship between the face-to-face and online classrooms, and explore the many activities and tasks technology has helped me offer to my students in both types of settings. The activities I present have the purpose to explore how effective they are in showcasing my students in action, which is the final result I wish to obtain. Instead of providing pedagogical standards or research in this article, I prefer to "show and tell" the outcome of my students' achievements through the activities I propose. I believe it useful to have concrete examples that can perhaps inspire some creativity.

I had the opportunity to devise an online course for my intensive Italian 123 first and second semester course in summer 2017. My goal was to deliver the exact same course I offer in a face-to-face environment, pedagogically solid and culturally valid and meaningful, that would maintain the students' interest high in order to recruit for my upper division courses. The idea of an online course was new to me, and forced me to be open to all options for language learning, or rather, to find ways to allow my students to learn effectively. I did my research, and discovered that certain types of technology, and the use of certain apps, could make education more personalized for my students. In *Education, the Case for Language Learning*, appeared in The Guardian in February 2014, Von Ahn, founder of the popular language app Duolinguo, states: "The truth of the matter is that learning a language takes months or years. We have to find a way to keep them [the students] interested and that's where the gamification came in." As technology is making education more

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[2] In *Andragogy: Adult Learning Theory in Perspective*, Malcom S. Knowles states: "Teacher education at all times should exemplify and demonstrate the teaching methods found most effective with adult groups. Because of the variety of needs to be served, a teacher-education program will give opportunity to utilize many teaching methods: group discussion to solve common problems; discussion by a panel, composed of representatives of community welfare; forums to supply information on public affairs. Group projects, observation, individual study, and lectures may likewise be employed in appropriate situations. If the use of each method is preceded by an examination of its potential values and is followed by an analysis of its effectiveness, every lesson will not only serve its own specific purpose, but will also demonstrate a technique of teaching." (15)

personalized, I realize that it is encouraging students to a more active approach to learning, and that online tools are going to be most effective when used as a component of a larger arsenal of tools.

Before I continue to articulate on my experience teaching an online course, allow me to mention an application I created myself in 2013, called *Impara l'italiano con l'ispettor Zunicchi*. The idea came from a class I offered: an introduction to the history of the Italian mystery novel. I devised a language learning module that students could use once a week as a complement to the course, and I developed a program that would challenge their reading, aural, and comprehension skills. Students were to compete in solving a mystery, where a crime had been committed. Their task was to discover the who, when, what, and why. The module was a venue for students to live the language experiencing it through a computer game; they were exposed to task oriented cultural topics that included geography, music, representative videos, readings, and aural activities with the goal to immerse them into the culture and allow them to use their own language skills. The success was instantaneous, and students loved the class. They mastered a particular and unusual type of vocabulary based on crime, using words associated to poisons, weapons, evidence, tests, samples, and alibis. [3] The victim in my game is an industrialist, and he is murdered by poisoned mushrooms; the crime is of passion; the discovery of the story and the suspects' alibis are what will help each student find clues. I am sharing a few examples of how this module was created and implemented, and I encourage anyone to experiment with Camtasia and Share Pointe if you have the time. Even my students who do not take the course use the application just for fun, especially intermediate level students who already have a better knowledge of Italian grammar. https://youtu.be/1X3wEW6N9W4

The effect of my game testifies that students need to have some sort of meaningful application of the language once they leave the classroom, and a game is a good way to keep their interest high. I can see how a simple mobile application like Duolinguo is so successful today among our learners. It offers interfaces and timed language challenges, and tracks scores. It has four levels of intensity and each intensity comes with a different daily learning timeline. In *Duolinguo Used Gamification & Nailed It*, journalist Reham Dibas explains that the integration of gamification makes the app the most downloaded and used educational app around the world. [4] I encourage my students to use Duolinguo, and ask them to show me their reached levels once a week. I hope that after the first year, they will be ahead enough to want to explore on their own verb tenses like the subjunctive. In *Why Learn a Foreign Language?* Professor Emerita of German Studies Ruth H. Sanders states: "The shock of discovering the subjunctive happens only once; after that, you'll start to understand it as one tool in a culture's toolbox for solving universal human communication problems." (84) While the subjunctive might represent a shock to our students, technology is still a shock to many teachers, who fear of being supplanted by it. The newest advances in educational technology- use of mobile devices, virtual reality, scan of QRs, digital course material, data-informed research, not to mention the current international change in

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[3] The idea for the game came from a true event. When I was in my early teens I went hiking in the hills of Liguria with three friends and we stumbled upon a dead body. At first, we only saw a fancy pair of leather shoes sticking out from under some rocks, but then we noticed legs, so we ran back to town to warn an adult. To this day, I do not know anything about the person, unfortunately, but I elaborated the story and gave it my own twist for the purpose of the game.

[4] The creators of the app integrated the gamification techniques in it based on these rules: Motivation by small achievable goals which a user can set for himself, so that the daily use of the application can eventually become a daily habit; Continuous progress, using bars and scores that appear everywhere and show the level of achievement and how far each user has come; External triggers to keep the users motivated to come back and learn, such as emails and personal reminders. < https://www.gamiphy.co/software-gamification-duolingo-case/ >

education [5]- are powerful enough to deliver content, assesses, and engage students in course learning, all without a teacher. The audience is no longer the teacher, but the peers and the world, because social networks have changed our notion of audience. Therefore, technology has become that element in our culture toolbox that we pull out to solve our universal communication, too.

The student revolt is upon us. University of Exeter professor Donald Bligh disdained lectures in the seventies stating that students let their professors bore them. Bligh suggested in his *What's the Use for Lectures?* "[…] no lecture should last more than fifteen-twenty minutes," (19) but since he made that recommendation, student attention spans have been cut to half that time. In the mean-time, even the required text book is declining because students can get by without. They seek source materials on their own, actively engaging in course subject matter. Students attend online courses more and more, too. This leads to the question whether asynchronous learning can really be effective, so let's make the distinction. In the journal Hybrid Pedagogy, Associate Professor at the American University in Cairo Maha Bali states: "The strength of online learning might lie in the asynchronous components." Synchronous e-learning involves online studies through videoconferencing and chat. The learning tool is real-time and allows students, like in a virtual classroom, to interact with peers and instructors. It is very similar to a face-to-face environment. Questions and answers are provided instantly, hence the word synchronous. On the other hand, asynchronous e-learning involves coursework delivered via message boards posted on online forums, the web, and email. Students complete the course at their own pace. The advantages of asynchronous classes are, according to Bali, the non-marginal issue of convenience, promotion of deep reflection, less pressure, and flexibility. She argues: " Synchronous learning is first of all biased against certain time zones," and: "An imperfect way around this is to change the time of such interactions each week to accommodate each of the extreme time zones — i.e. you accommodate each time-zone half as often." She continues stating: "Synchronous meetings are culturally unaware of people's holidays; biased against families and busy people; synchronous meetings that involve audiovisuals are elitist (there could be choppy internet); and finally, meetings rely heavily on linguistic capital." In her opinion, if you are not fluent in the dominant language spoken, you are lost. I believe there is some truth behind all this if we are considering MOOC courses (massive open online courses). Aimed at unlimited participation and open access via the web, these courses make their money by offering bundles of connected classes in targeted fields, have them carry college credit, and offer a deep, discounted tuition price. However, while many universities are pushing for MOOC courses, programs are still reluctant to move in that direction. Mike Bergleson, CEO and cofounder of human resource company Everwise, states in his article *4 Pros and 4 Cons of MOOCs: Whether to Take Study from Classroom to Online*: "The disadvantages of MOOC courses are that they are oversimplified and too basic, lack interaction, meetups, and physical space, and there is a high rate of abandonment." Jeffrey Selingo, in *MOOC U: The Revolution Isn't Over*, appeared in the Chronicle for Higher Education, has this to say:

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[5] Currently, there is an international change in education that includes the development of new learning programs and policies, such as (a) bilingual education programs (Thomas & Collier, 2012), including courses taught in a second language (usually English); (b) University programs resulting from the implementation of the Bologna process and the European Higher Education Area, with an emphasis on a more autonomous way of learning (EHEA, 2010); (c) the systematic evaluation and assessment of students and educational results, such as PISA (Program for International Student Assessment, OECD, 2014); and (d) the application of guidelines and recommendations in order to correct the problems in education identified by means of these evaluations and assessments. This international shift in education has recently motivated the emergence of several new scenarios and environments for teaching and learning. Thus, we are witnesses to the transition from the traditional, pure (and opposed) face-to- face and distance approaches to teaching and learning to a whole new range of (mixed) ways of learning, such as blended learning, e-learning, ubiquitous learning, social learning, incidental learning, contextual learning, autonomous learning or lifelong learning. All these new approaches (discussed in the next chapters) put the focus on learners and are intended to adapt to their needs and limitations. In our days, for example, people do not have much time for learning, and it is often difficult for us to allocate a fixed moment in our schedules to attend courses (be they virtual or not). This is the new scenario for education, and the way we teach and learn is adapting in accordance. < https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED565804.pdf >

"College leaders should focus on using MOOCs to complement and enhance their continuing--education programs, as the number of options students have for education in small bites and on their own schedule continues to grow." I might not be ready to introduce a MOOC course quite yet, but I do believe that making students work with a virtual team can be part of their education. Web based platforms such as Canvas, for example, can become a single portal for course activities, where synchronous and asynchronous learning come together in a meaningful way. Regardless of whether one chooses synchronous, asynchronous or a combination of both, it is the quality of the materials, instruction, interactions and activities that create effective learning. Which brings me to my strong point: it's about teaching, first of all; technology is just a tool.

My experience with online teaching is positive, and allows me to offer a course that is partly asynchronous, where face-to-face meetings of an hour and a half via Zoom online occur 5 days a week for 5 weeks (the duration of the course), although students are required to "Zoom in" 3 days a week. As I chart pros and cons, and what I can use in face-to-face and online environments, as well as enhance if possible, I realize that technology allows me to offer well-structured and balanced classes. My goals are always to give students an opportunity to learn in complex, realistic, and relevant environments. I achieve this by using, for example, videos, readings, and discussion, that lead students to create their own videos in which they act, interact, or perform on a given topic. Examples are: a) a Skype interview with a CEO of an Italian company- for example one that produces olive oil- that leads to questions and research, after students have watched videos, learned about the olive oil production in Italy, and its economic impact; b) studying ecology and environment, and having students record themselves in action, and present on composting, 0% waste, recycling, ecological furniture, and particular projects like addressing the Mayor of Naples through a local high school to solve the garbage issue; c) discussing cuisine, learning about the culture of a specific region, and having students use certain ingredients as they prepare a recipe, all recorded and presented to the class. My goal is for them to consider multiple perspectives on specific topics and develop cultural understanding; to be engaged in social negotiation as an integral part of learning; to take ownership of learning; to experience the culture through multiple modes of representation; to collaborate on project work to build reading and writing skills and increase speaking fluency through practice; and to improve reading comprehension. All of my language students in lower and upper division courses regularly participate in activities that allow them to use the language through realistic venues, applying the simple technology of collaborative boards, videos, and applications for their presentations. If I structure my class so that each meeting, face-to-face or online, contains active use of language and application of vocabulary and grammar, followed by homework reinforcement and online activities, I am able to give a sense of immersion into the culture and language. Examples below highlight some activities, with a few links to students-in-action videos. These links have the purpose of highlighting linguistic achievements, but also to remind us that it is easier to learn when we are having fun. The learning outcome is that students have focused on learning vocabulary through group activities; they have reasoned on patterns, and deduced solutions; they create a script, a montage, and presentation; and they will receive constructive review and feedback from their peers and the instructor as a final reward.

1. *Show and Tell*. Beginners Italian. Students use nouns and adjectives that help create sentence structure. They are asked to discuss an item of their choice. Some talk about their pet, but many choose a strange object that reveals itself through a description. They record themselves and upload on Canvas.

2. *Culinary expertise*. Beginners Italian. Students show and tell a recipe while preparing it. They may simply discuss a recipe, but most choose to prepare a dish while they discuss. Recipes are typically Italian, and vary from a simple bruschetta, pizza, or insalata caprese, to pasta, meats and even fish dishes. The truly invested students go above and beyond, and invite friends to savor the recipe! Presentation is recorded and uploaded on Canvas. Here is an example:
   https://youtu.be/mffaD3lXeuA part one
   https://youtu.be/gNErSO9s4Bk part two
3. *The Italian Me*. Beginners Italian. Students show off their Italian "me," discussing who they are, where they live in Italy, what they do, and what they like. They usually play the role dressing up, and conclude with a catchy phrase that truly underlines their Italian identity. Presentations are recorded and uploaded on Canvas.

When face-to-face, but could be also done online:
1. *Let's All Be Ecological*. Intermediate Italian. Students discuss and show how they can be part of a 0% waste mentality, or creative and successful as they recycle or are environmentally involved. They must create a video that showcases them ecologically in action. Topics vary and nobody has the same topic. We get to explore many options of this interesting field, and they have two minutes to discuss in class what they are showing in the video. Videos are recorded and uploaded on Canvas.
2. *Let's Explore the Middle Ages!* Intermediate Italian. Students must do a presentation on a typical Italian medieval dish, city, or custom, choosing from different topics that I provide. The presentation is in pairs, and they have two minutes to showcase their topic and show pictures that they have previously uploaded on Canvas. Some of their favorite topics are Middle Ages and personal hygiene, the criminal and judicial system, sugars and sweeteners, diseases and epidemics, curing herbs, and medieval castles.
3. *Renaissance!* Intermediate Italian. Students choose a famous Italian person who lived during the Renaissance, or an aspect of that time, such as architecture, cuisine, social classes, education, political structures, music, art, and fashion. Their presentation is individual and memorized, and they have up to three minutes of time. They can use pictures and music in the background that they have previously uploaded on Canvas.
4. *The Regions of Italy*. Beginners and Intermediate Italian. Students are assigned a region and they must do some research and create a video in which they read to the class 10 clues that will help peers guess which region it is. This is a popular activity, where students record themselves speaking in front of the camera and uploading on Canvas. During class time, I play the individual recordings and we all try to guess. The videos are engaging, funny, and start with harder clues that become gradually easier, from 10 to 1. The outcome is often hilarious because I encourage students to dress up to represent that region, and their efforts are priceless!
5. *Me and My Sport*. Intermediate Italian. Students photo shop themselves in extreme sports and tell all about it. Some use pictures when they were children, involved in some close encounter with danger while doing a sport, others showcase high school achievements and trophies, but most have not ever done any extreme sports, so they use photoshop. I make sure all sports are different, and some of the popular choices are parachuting, paragliding, squirrel gliding, extreme biking or cycling, snow sports, rafting, etc.

6. *Fashion Show.* Beginners Italian. Students walk the fashion runway in class, wearing outfits they discuss. This is one of the favorite presentations in my intensive language classes. Two examples of students in action:
https://youtu.be/prrOaCTiktE part one
https://youtu.be/Z6AC0eq9R8g part two

7. *TG NEWS- Notizie di Oggi.* Intermediate Italian. Students must record a news presentation covering three main areas: a current topic (environment, politics, health etc.); flashback in time (history); culture (cuisine, sport, art etc.) They comment and create interaction on the chosen topic. They cover each of the three areas specifying dates and references, and create an entertaining and well-organized background setting that reflects the Italian culture of news casting. In groups of two, or three in case of uneven number. 7 minutes maximum time. Here is an example of students in action: https://youtu.be/rf-MG1XEsnM

The chart below sorts my ideas, and helps me push back against a common misconception that we often see an online communication as somehow inferior, and that "[…] an amount of compensating is necessary to make up for the absence of a classroom and the regular human, social aspects of interaction," (Garcia, Standlee, Bechkoff, and Cui 2009) rather than seeing the differing contexts of physical and online environments simply as different communicative modes of one lifeworld.

Italian
Analyzing face-to-face and online synchronous teaching, and comparing

Face-to-Face strategy	Online strategy	Comments
Regions: showing slides on the different regions and engaging students in learning about culture. Assessment is subjective to students' responses.	Regions: Students look at the slides on their own and study them because they know they will have an extra credit quiz on regions- we also talk about the regions during our Zoom session, but I do not show them the slides. Assessment is a graded quiz.	The outcome is similar, however, looking at slides together is a fruitful experience: students get to ask lots of questions. Face-to-face allows a little more time for this. On the other hand, online students are invested in learning the details because they know they can get extra credit with a quiz on the regions at the end of the course. This extra credit is up to 5 points with 10 questions, each worth half a point. The extra credit is added to their comprehensive final online quiz.
Communication skills and practice of the language: Face-to-face students talk with me and their peers, and do group activities. They are given tasks, or are involved in debates. Group activities are abundant, three times a week. Assessment occurs through rubrics,	Communication skills and practice of the language: Online students talk with me and their peers, and do group activities through breakout rooms. Online students love to work in breakout rooms because they negotiate meaning and difficulties with their peers. During a zoom session I try to give them at least three breakout room activities. In student surveys it always is clearly stated that working in breakout rooms is their favorite activity, so I encourage students to meet via Zoom and study together. I find that both activities help to create a sense of community.	There is plenty of room for improvisation in both classes, face-to-face and online. Students feel comfortable expressing themselves in the target language, and know that they will be called on. I don't often ask for volunteers, and prefer to engage them singularly each time, so they stay alert and active all the time. When in groups, their task feedback is individual, meaning that they cannot choose a spokesperson for the group, but must all provide answers.

self-assessment, and task oriented activities.	Assessment is the same as face-to-face.	
Activities: Learn a chapter, discuss culture, study vocabulary, use new grammar structures, create an activity, post on Canvas, perform. Assessment is a graded activity.	Activities: Learn a chapter, discuss culture, study vocabulary, use new grammar structures, create an activity, post on Canvas, perform and also have asynchronous feedback through a discussion board. For example, when students are assigned an activity where they must perform the language in front of the online class, they also must take notes and collaborate in voting for their favorite performance. This can be done in a face-to-face environment too. Assessment is a graded activity.	The online activities are more thorough and easier to assess, in my opinion, mainly because I use more rubrics, online chats and forums, videos, and labs. In a face-to-face environment, sometimes I have less time for details, and although all students have a tablet or phone, I would still need to take the time to have them log in, access the info, etc. whereas online we are already all synched.
Assessment: 1. Oral exams with audio, video and oral questions 2. Online quizzes 3. Daily language assessment	Assessment: 1. Oral exams with audio, video and oral questions 2. Quizzes online 3. Daily language assessment	The outcome is the same. 1. For the oral exam, in both environments, students listen to an audio recording and provide answers to my questions, then watch a video (3 minutes long) and provide answers to my questions, and finally write the oral questions I ask (dictation), and provide answers. 2. Online quizzes are accessed through the Lock Down Browser application. They have 20 minutes to take the quiz and are tested on vocabulary and grammar at the end of each chapter we study. 3. Daily language assessment is oral: I begin a warm up with questions that I prefer not to show on the screen right away. I like them to rely on their listening skills only and try to negotiate meaning. After a response, I show the question.
Types of oral activities: 1. Fashion show: example on video 2. Show and tell 3. Middle Ages; 4. Recycling; 5. Me and My Sport 6. Culinary: example on video 7. Extracurricular Assessment is a graded activity.	Types of oral activities: 1. Show and tell 2. Culinary activity 3. The Italian me Assessment is a graded activity. I don't do the other activities because the online class is for beginners only	The outcome is similar: students prepare a well-rehearsed presentation and deliver to the class. When in a face-to-face class, students interact with peers who react to their presentations; when in an online class, students use a discussion board and communicate their ideas. For extracurricular activities, there really is none in an online environment. When face-to-face, students get involved in events and perform the language without realizing they are speaking and interacting spontaneously.

Use of text book to introduce chapter, vocabulary, and grammar structures	Use of text book to introduce chapter, vocabulary, and grammar structures	The outcome is the same: having a text book helps me give structure to their assignments.

Over the last two decades, there has been increased interest in what is sometimes called course-embedded assessment. Lori Breslaw, director of the Teaching and Learning Laboratory at MIT, in *Methods of Measuring Learning Outcomes and Value Added* states: "This approach comes from the realization that faculty are assessing student learning all the time—it is what they do as part of their role as instructors. However, they may not be consciously looking at student work products for evidence of what their students have (or have not) learned." She continues, arguing that there is the need for faculty to "go meta," that is: "[…] to analyze assignments, exams, etc. specifically for evidence of learning. This may require using more rigorous methods of investigation along with the usual ways of grading, which may, in turn, require training faculty or the expertise of an educational researcher." (4) I could argue that assessing constantly is busy work, and that I have no time to deal with it. However, if I look at assessment as a way to improve the quality of my teaching, then it is well worth it. As I share my resources to maintain a real language learning environment, I want to underline that everything starts with a well-planned syllabus, and material that can help students see and feel the language, and really live it. The example videos I include demonstrate students' engagement, interest, enjoyment, and even passion for the language. They also represent the learning outcome, and underline their abilities and knowledge. Task based language learning brings my students to an Italian immersion weekend, where they cook, play games, and experience living the language and culture; or has them contact an Italian company and conduct interviews that will help provide meaningful information; or has them negotiate meaning in groups, when assigned a specific task. Technology gives results through assessments like tests, quizzes, essays, and projects. It helps run a classroom efficiently and effectively, and really is a teacher's number one best friend. Focused and personalized instruction that incorporates audio and video applications and feedback tools, provide not only a rich, social environment that students can explore, but also reach out to all students, in general. Engaging the students with the content they are consuming is the goal, so I invite you to be creative!

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