Project-based learning and the development of translingual/transcultural subjectivities: Case studies from the Italian classroom

Borbala Gaspar,[1] *University of Arizona* (ID)
Chantelle Warner, University of Arizona

Abstract

Contemporary approaches to second language and culture education often emphasize the importance of meaningful experiences, which in the case of instructed language learning, has prompted interest in pedagogies that allow learners to engage with acts of doing and creating that go beyond language practice. Project-based learning, which gives learners opportunities to solve a problem or develop a product relatively autonomously, remains one of the main models for what this can look like in the classroom. Some recent studies have suggested that project-based pedagogies coupled with literacy-oriented approaches can also foster learners' awareness of discourse and how language choices index identities within a given community (e.g., Michelson, 2019). This study contributes to these conversations by exploring how project-based learning coupled with ideas from contemporary literacy studies can engage a range of multisensory meaning-making resources, which afford learners rich opportunities to experiment with their own positions vis-a-vis aspects of the language and culture they are studying. Based on three case studies from an intermediate Italian class, the article shows how some students worked within and beyond the parameters of the project—a multi-week research project on a cultural topic of the students' choosing—to fashion for themselves translingual and transcultural subjectivities (Kramsch, 2009), with personal relationships to the Italian language and culture. The article concludes with implications for project-based pedagogies that approach literacy as lived experience that goes beyond texts, as well as for future research that considers literacy activities as multisensory.

Keywords: *case study, project-based language learning, literacy, culture, subjectivity*

Introduction

Drawing from a range of theoretical and empirical perspectives, scholars in second language and culture (LC2) teaching have, with increasing insistence, emphasized the importance of meaningful, engaging experiences for deep learning (e.g., Dubreil & Thorne, 2017). As a pedagogical method that centers learners' interests around a semi-structured activity and invites them to take on new roles as language users (Bell, 2010; Stoller, 2006), project-based language learning (PBLL) has been promoted as a means through which LC2 learners can learn by doing. When coupled with other approaches, such as multiliteracies pedagogies, PBLL has also been shown to promote awareness of the connections between language and culture (Achugar et al., 2020; Maginn, 2020). Through the creation of a final product designed to be shared with others, students are able to engage in meaningful acts of literacy and culture as lived experiences (Pahl & Rowsell, 2020; Warner & Michelson, 2018) that engage learners' emergent multilingual subjectivities in complex ways (Kramsch, 2009).

This article contributes to these discussions by considering the subjective dimensions of PBLL, the different kinds of sustained personal engagement it affords, and how those experiences can shape students' evolving sense of themselves as legitimate multilingual subjects in the language and culture they are learning. Specifically, the study presented in this article focuses on a semester-long project that was implemented in intermediate Italian classes at the University of Arizona. We look closely at the students' choices during the projects, in which they were asked to investigate an aspect of Italian culture and create a presentation including an in-class activity to introduce the topic to the class. Through case studies of three individuals, we consider how these learners worked with the affordances of interrelated literacy practices that constituted the project-based unit to position themselves in relation to Italian language and culture vis-a-vis their projects. Based on this analysis, we investigate the overarching question that guides this study: How project-based learning informed by contemporary literacy theory might create opportunities for LC2 learners to develop and expand their sense of themselves, especially in cases where there is not a substantial local community of speakers. Specifically, we are interested in the role of multisensory and affective experiences, afforded by the open-ended projects at the center of this study, and how those might play a role in the learners' dynamic designs of self (Lam, 2000).

Project-Based Learning and Making: Learning Literacy and Culture by Doing

In this first section, we begin by orienting the present classroom-based study within discussions of project-based learning in the field of LC2 teaching and learning, as well as within more recent related conversations from literacy studies on *making*—that is, learning "through a process of constructing things to share with others" (Donaldson, 2014, p. 1). We also connect this to ongoing discussions of transculturality as a dimension or even a goal of language education.

The conceptual basis for project-based learning (PBL) is in Dewey's (1938) theory of experiential learning, which posits that knowledge is socially constructed and based on experience (Beckett, 2006, pp. 3-4). The role of education is thus to provide high quality experiences that focus on fostering higher cognitive skills and enable deeper understanding. PBL emerged in conjunction with broader support for student-centered pedagogies in the 1980s as a method of realizing experiential learning, alongside other related holistic approaches (van Lier, 2006). Project-based learning is broadly defined as "an instructional approach that contextualizes learning by presenting learners with problems to solve or products to develop" (Moss & Van Duzer, 1998, p. 2). The projects described in the scholarly literature are varied and range from analog to digitally mediated, from film to poetry, and from community activism to research.

Within the field of second language teaching, PBLL has been advocated as an effective way of teaching content and language together (Beckett, 2006; Beckett & Slater, 2020; Gras-Velazquez, 2020; Mikulec & Miller, 2011; Stoller, 2006) in ways that resonate with proficiency-based and communicative approaches. Because the parameters of the projects are at least in part developed and defined by the students, additional potential benefits of PBLL often cited in the literature are the development of learner autonomy (e.g., Ramirez, 2014) and increased motivation (e.g., Nishioka, 2006; Stoller, 2006). Two very recent volumes on PBLL emphasize the potential of a wide variety of forms of PBL for allowing students to engage with multilingual, multicultural, and even global communities outside of the classroom (Beckett & Slater, 2019; Bruno Grazioli, 2020; Gras-Velazquez, 2020). Several of these studies also highlight the value of PBLL for establishing connections between language/culture learning and other disciplinary areas of inquiry (Achugar et al. 2020; Carpenter & Matsugu, 2020).

As is salient in more recent publications, PBLL has developed within second language teaching and learning to function not only in the creation of contexts for language practice but to afford opportunities for complex semiotic endeavors that are multisensory and multimodal (van Lier, 2006). Some of these studies implement PBLL pedagogies in conjunction with simulation pedagogies (e.g., Dooly & Sadler, 2016;

Dupuy, 2006; Levine, 2004; Michelson, 2019). In these cases, PBLL is embedded within a fictionalized reality grounded in an actual sociocultural context (the simulation), within which learners appropriate certain discourse forms as they assume roles and identities (often as imagined native speakers) through the structured and semi-structured activities that constitute the project. Others include simulation-like roleplay elements, such as Brown's (2006) *dégustation* project for a French gastronomy course, in which students worked in groups to curate a French culinary demonstration for the others in the class to experience, before composing a cultural research report including the history, cultural significance, and preparation of their food items. Brown argued that by engaging learners in real-life, multisensory acts of communication and creation, learners became active in their own literacy socialization (Brown, 2006).

In many of these more recent examples, there are multiple points of convergence between PBLL pedagogies and contemporary literacy-oriented frameworks as they have been adopted by, and conceptualized within, LC2 language and teaching. Literacy is understood in an expanded sense of not just reading and writing, but "socially recognized ways of generating, communicating, and negotiating meanings" (Lankshear & Knobel, 2011, p. 33). Literacy in this sociocultural sense does not reside in the minds of individuals but in the relations between language users, texts, and contexts of use (i.e., what people do with literacies). Often the doubly pluralized term *multiliteracies* is adopted instead to capture both cultural and linguistic diversity and the multiple modes through which literacy manifests, especially in the contemporary digital age. A central notion is that of language use as *meaning design* (New London Group, 1996). Design includes the *designs*, those meaning-making resources available to a speaker, as well as the acts of *designing*, the literacy practice through which meaning is realized, and finally, *redesigning*, the transformative potential each act of meaning has for the individuals involved and for society (Cope & Kalantzis, 2015). Within LC2 teaching and learning, this idea of meaning-making as design has inspired a growing body of work (e.g., Allen, 2018; Kern, 2000; Paesani, et al, 2016), including some of the simulation-based PBLL we mentioned before (e.g., Dupuy, 2006; Michelson, 2019; Michelson & Dupuy, 2014).

More recently, however, work in literacy studies has questioned how we can build upon the multiliteracies framework while also problematizing the potential "hyperrationality" that the metaphor of design can imply. For example, Leander and Boldt (2013) argued that literacy-related activity is often not projected toward some clearly defined textual end point but experienced "as living its life in the ongoing present, forming relations and connections across signs, objects, and bodies in often unexpected ways" (p. 534). In their work on what they describe as "living literacy," (p.13), Pahl and Rowsell and their collaborators (2020) similarly argued that by emphasizing thinking to the neglect of feeling, literacy research has overlooked the role of affect, embodiment, and emotions as ways of learning and knowing. They thus advocate approaches to literacy education that are more attentive to multisensory felt experiences, such as those enabled through *making*, as it has come to be defined within the so-called "maker movement," that is, as creative and often collaborative engagement with artifacts. The living literacy framework also emphasizes that literacy practices are acts of *worldmaking* (Stornaiuolo, 2015; see also Pahl and Rowsell, 2020, pp. 7-8), because in redesigning meanings, social actors can imagine and create new social worlds and roles for themselves within them.

This worldmaking capacity of literacy potentially connects again to the simulative forms of PBLL, in that new forms of meaning-making are connected deliberately to the development of emergent subjectivities and felt experiences of language learners. Although PBLL has been lauded as an approach that potentially engages learners' "hearts, bodies and senses" in this way (van Lier, 2006, p. xiv; see also Finkbeiner, 2000), there is little research to date that looks at how this engagement unfolds over the course of a project or how it shapes learners' sense of themselves in relation to the new language and culture. This latter aspect is particularly important, because, as a number of scholars have discussed in recent years, language and literacy development is connected to not only new forms of knowledge, but also new ways of being (Gee, 2012). Designing a project in and through new language and culture thus involves new subject positions, and it is important for teachers and curriculum designers to understand how this can evolve across the course of a PBLL experience.

Institutional and Curricular Context

The intermediate Italian course at the center of this study was taught by Borbala Gaspar in spring 2018, when the data for this study was collected. A similar project-based unit was piloted in 2017 and then developed to include more structured literacy-based activities leading up to the final presentations. The research projects were shaped in dialogue between the students and instructors across five main phases, which were each assigned intermittent deadlines across the 16-week course (see Table 1).

Table 1

Five Phases of the 16-Week Course

Project phase	Week	Language(s) used	Related Activities
Proposal draft	3	English/Italian	Proposal workshop
Revised proposal	6	English/Italian	Peer feedback on draft proposals
Slides draft	9	Italian	Workshops on designing slides and conducting online research in Italian
Revised slides	12	Italian	Practice presentation in small groups and peer feedback.
Oral presentation	16	Italian	Final presentation of research

For each phase, students received detailed instructions and a rubric (see Appendix). Because the project asked them to engage in a cognitively complex process of designing a research proposal, the opportunity to use English during early phases of the project served as a form of scaffolding by allowing them to draw more freely from their entire repertoire of meaning-making resources as they formulated their ideas.

As a first step, students were asked to complete a survey that asked them to brainstorm at least three topics of personal interest to them and related guiding questions they potentially wanted to explore for their project. The survey also included questions about their previous experiences researching online and their perceptions of speaking and presenting in Italian. Following the survey, Borbala Gaspar met with each student to discuss their topic and to provide guidance based on their responses. Each of the additional steps was also supported through modelling and in-class workshops, during which students were guided through practices related to conducting research in Italian (see Table 1). In the workshops, a combination of English and Italian was used, as the emphasis was on peer-peer and instructor-peer scaffolding of the research process.

Data Collection and Analysis

The primary aim of this study is to examine how the students worked within the parameters of the project-based assignments to develop new subject positions for themselves in relation to Italian and how socio-affective aspects of the projects contributed to this. To do this, we adopted a qualitative case study approach focusing on three students. Duff (2018) characterized case study research as a way of "making language learning complexities visible" (p. 144), noting "case study offers strong heuristic properties as well as analytic possibilities for illustrating a phenomenon in very vivid, detailed, and highly contextualized ways" (p. 145). For this reason, case study research is often associated with studies that take sociocultural dimensions of language learning as their focus—for example, those related to learner subjectivity and self (Duff, 2018; Kramsch, 2009), as is the case in the study at hand.

The class from which these case studies originate included 13 students, of which 11 students consented to allow their work to be used for research, of which only six completed all phases of the in-class project as well as all activities related to data collection. These included the five phases of the in-class project (see Table 1), the pre and post surveys, and the semi-structured interviews. Because we wanted to look at the trajectory of the project as a whole and how students worked within the affordances thereof to position themselves, we selected three focal participants—Tommaso, Carla, and Annamaria (all pseudonyms—from among the six participants. These three students not only satisfied our primary selection criteria but had also participated in a departmental undergraduate showcase at the end of the semester, thus providing further evidence to support that they were highly engaged in the project. Coincidentally, but not surprisingly given the relatively small size of the department, all three had taken the previous class with Borbala Gaspar the semester before. So, while these are, in many ways, ideal cases, we wanted to understand the contours of students' deep engagement with the project and thus opted for the diversity of data sources these three students provided, even though we acknowledge they are generalizable in some ways but not others.

The data sources for the three case studies include the range of artifacts that were completed at different phases of the project by all students as well as a post-project survey and a semi-structured interview that were completed only by consenting participants after the end of the course. The semi-structured interviews were conducted by a teaching colleague, who had collaborated in the development of the unit because of the combination of her in-depth familiarity with the course context and her relatively lower conflict of interest with any evaluative opinions the students might voice. These were conducted primarily in English, although both the interviewer and the interviewees engaged in some codeswitching. Additionally, because Borbala Gaspar was the instructor during the course, we also draw from her recollections as a participant observer to develop a thicker, more detailed description of the context and events that shaped the projects.

During the first round of analysis, both authors independently coded each case study inductively, noting phrases from the presentations and semi-structured interviews that expressed the participants' relationships to their topic, to Italian language and culture, or to the project. We also created memos summarizing our general observations. We then met and compared these initial impressions. For the second round of analysis, we consulted positioning theory (e.g., Davies and Harrè, 1999; Kayi-Aydar, 2019), an analytic framework that considers how social actors situate themselves or others as coherent participants with specific rights and obligations shaped by "jointly produced story lines" (Davies & Harré, 1999, p. 37). Inspired by this work, we again used inductive coding, but this time with particular attention to the positionalities and perspectives of the participants at two key moments in the development of their research projects: namely, the proposal and the presentation to the class and their reflections on these in the interviews.

Findings

Case Studies

In this next section we turn to the three case studies from Tommaso, Carla, and Annamaria. As already noted, these three are somewhat ideal cases because of the level of engagement the students reported. But at the same time, the topics they chose were thematically typical for the students in the course. The most popular topics related to cultural customs and traditions, gastronomy, and history; Tommaso, Carla, and Annamaria selected the tradition of the Pulcinella figure, pasta making, and Etruscan archaeology, respectively, and so the topics were thus representative in scope. Through an analysis of their positionalities and perspectives, we considered how these students worked within the parameters of the literacy-based activities to construct different senses of themselves as speakers of the Italian language and as engaged in the culture (Ochs, 2002). In what follows, we take each participant in turn and follow the chronology of the project, highlighting prominent moments that showcase their evolving subjectivities in relation to their Italian studies.

Tommaso: "It kind of was just a part of me"

Tommaso, a 23-year-old undergraduate student, was completing a major in anthropology and a minor in Italian at the time of the study. In his interview, Tommaso shared that his grandparents were immigrants from Romania and that his grandfather had spent time in a refugee camp in Italy. He chose to learn Italian because Romanian was not offered on campus, and Italian seemed to be the next closest language. This family connection was also clear in a project he had conducted the previous semester, for which he had chosen the Italian panini sandwiches as a topic because his grandmother had brought a recipe with her to America from Romania. In the spring 2018 pre-project survey, Tommaso looked more towards his major for areas of inspiration, listing "Ancient Rome" and "making masquerade masks" among his interests. During his conference with Borbala Gaspar at the start of the project, she coincidentally had a poster in her office from a previous student's presentation on a character from the *Commedia dell'Arte*, a form of masked theater originating in Italy during the 16th century. Tommaso expressed interest in this topic as a means of exploring the making of masquerade masks, and after a quick search online, he selected Pulcinella as the focus of his project. In his proposal, Tommaso explained his choice saying, "I chose Pulcinella, because use [sic] in popular culture not just in Venetian masks, but even in Naples pizza. He has everything I am interested in food, culture, art, and history."

His initial title, *Pulcinella: Naples' Hermes,* centered the association of the figure with the city of Naples. At the top of the document, he included a 19th century print of Pulcinella and an image from the web site of a Venice-based studio specializing in masquerade masks as a way of visually representing this connection between tradition and contemporary popular culture. The focus on cultural history is also echoed in his research questions, which dealt with the history and ongoing influence of the figure. Although the preliminary findings section was a fairly disconnected list of information about Pulcinella—which suggested he was still trying to piece his history together—even at this early stage, he adopted a position as a cultural scholar resonant with his major in anthropology.

In the final version of his presentation to the class, simply titled *Pulcinella*, Tommaso included the same 19th century image of the figure, but his justification for the topic had become more specific:

> Mi sono concentrato su Pulcinella, perché ha un passato antico nelle arti e viene utilizzato per promuovere il cibo e le persone si identificano con lui.
> [I concentrated on Pulcinella because he has an ancient past in the arts and he is used to promote food and people identify themselves with him.]

Tommaso's interest in historical and culinary aspects of culture are still prominent here, but instead of highlighting Naples as he had in the proposal, it is "people" more generally who identify with him. This change in wording resonated with a comment that Tommaso had made to the class on one occasion: "Pulcinella is everywhere." This anticipates a shift that begins to occur across Tommaso's project from Pulcinella as a specific and traditionally Italian figure to a more transcultural concept.

Tommaso's presentation generally followed the focus on cultural history he had already mentioned in the proposal. For example, his first several slides presented a lengthy discussion of the Commedia Dell'Arte, including the other traditional characters. In earlier conversations with Borbala Gaspar, she had suggested cutting down this section, but Tommaso repeatedly resisted because he felt he needed to provide a bigger historical picture. Much of the rest of the presentation was devoted to contextualizing Pulcinella within Italian culture and history from ancient Rome to the present and to showing connections to other parts of the world. This drive for comprehensiveness contributed to the fact that Tommaso's presentation was the longest in the class by about fifteen minutes (totaling 45 minutes, compared to the assignments' recommendation of 10-15 minutes).

He did maintain an emphasis on regional origins, for example, through a slide titled "Napoli e Pulcinella" (Naples and Pulcinella), which featured a person dressed as the character eating a slice of pizza alongside text establishing Pulcinella's origins in Naples. He noted here that Naples is a region that has undergone

many hardships throughout which they "sono sempre riusciti a riguadagnare la loro compostezza e dare un contributo eccezionale alla città e al mondo" (they have always managed to regain their composure and make an exceptional contribution to the city and the world).
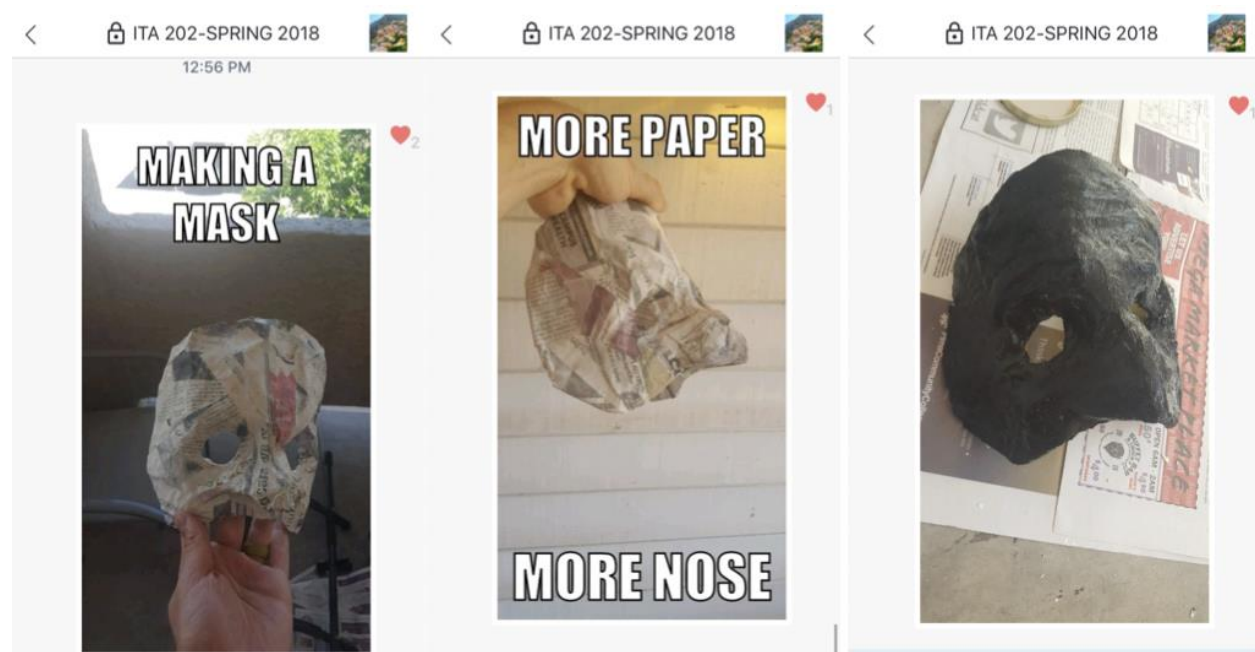
For most of the presentation Tommaso's position was that of a scholar of Italian culture. He stood at the podium, occasionally stepping forward to point to some elements projected on the screen. He maintained an academic register by using impersonal language. His scholarly role was further performed in the way he dressed up for his presentation, wearing a white dress shirt and a dark blue suit—a very formal style of dress for undergraduate students on campus, which his classmates commented upon. There were, however, several key moments in the presentation and the process leading up to it that broke with this format.

After the discussion of the Commedia dell'Arte, Tommaso introduced an activity in which his classmates were asked to work in groups and demonstrate gestures without talking. Based on Borbala Gaspar's conversations with Tommaso before his presentation, his goal with the mimicking activity was to help learners reflect on the power of nonverbal forms of communication, like body movements and facial expressions, to better understand Pulcinella, who was well known for his excessive use of gestures.

This experiential dimension was also present in Tommaso's research process. Beyond the requirements of the assignment, Tommaso decided to pursue the question he suggested in his survey about making masks. The class used a group messaging app, GroupMe, for informal communication between members of the classroom community (see Figure 1). Over the course of a couple of days, Tommaso posted three images, in which he shared different stages of the creation of his Pulcinella mask. On the day of the presentation, he brought the mask and passed it around in the class. He mentioned his curiosity about how masquerades are made and explained to the class what processes he used to make his mask and then passed it around for everyone to take a closer look at it.

Figure 1

Tommaso's Pulcinella Mask

In the last part of Tommaso's presentation, the tension between a removed scholarly position and a more experiential relationship to his object of study became salient, as he began to focus less on historical representations of facts about Pulcinella and more on what might be described as a sort of Pulcinellan spirit

that enters first on Slide 20. Echoing the early comment about hardships, he described Naples as "un paradiso che è proprio vicino all'inferno!" (a paradise right next to a hell) with an image pointing to the volcano near Naples and then, on the same slide, described Pulcinella as a character full of contradictions befitting such a city. Here Pulcinella no longer seemed to represent a theatrical figure or symbol, but a set of values and personality traits ascribed to the city of Naples. In the last two slides, Tommaso shifted to first-person pronouns, initially to express his own associations with Naples, such as with food, wine, and the mafia, and now with Pulcinella. He then used the first-person plural for the first time to express a universal experience of a Pulcinellan spirit, as he understood it:

> Pulcinella è nelle nostre barzellette pervertite. Lui esiste nelle culture di tutto il mondo. Può essere visto nei nostri comici, cartoni animati, persino nei libri. Può essere Homer Simpson negli Stati Uniti o Mario in Giappone.
> [Pulcinella is in our perverse jokes. He exists in the culture of all of the world. He can be seen in our comedians, cartoons, even in books. He can be Homer Simpson in the United States or Mario in Japan.]

A similar idea was also echoed in his interview in which he construed Pulcinella's universal appeal as within his purview as an archaeology student: "My major is archeology. What pulled me in with Pulcinella is every culture impacts the culture that is next to. No matter how weird or different people are, throughout the world, we kind of are all the same." When asked how he prepared for the presentation, Tommaso seemed gently dismissive, commenting, "It was at the end of the semester. I have been researching this for months, so it kind of was just a part of me." This idea of the research evolving into more than an external object of study was also echoed later in the interview, when he was asked, "So, what is the meaning of Pulcinella to you today?" Tommaso said:

> Looking at what is terrible in life and laughing at it. It is saying oh, yeah, you know, I got a flat tire. You know, I might as well go drinking tonight, you know not taking life too seriously…I have all these bills but, you know, I'm still alive. What's the big deal? At least I still have my health or if I don't have my health, at least I'm still alive. Someone passes, you know, at least they're not suffering anymore. Going from either [sic] the negative and just laughing at it. And saying who cares?

For Tommaso, Pulcinella seemed to become more than an object of study; instead, it evolved into an attitude towards life. Although he associated this Pulcinellan spirit with Naples, by his own account, he came to not only know Pulcinella as a representation in historical artifacts or contemporary culture but also to "feel the symbolic meaning" and to view it as something he could carry with him in his life.

Annamaria "I want to keep the tradition alive"

Annamaria was studying business and had added a double major in Italian in the previous semester. She grew up in San Francisco in a second-generation Italian family. Both her mother and her grandmother spoke Italian at home. They also maintained Italian culinary traditions, especially her grandmother who regularly made fresh pasta for the family. This interest in Italian cooking had also shaped her presentation in the previous semester, which focused on traditional cannoli pastries.

Based on all of this, it was unsurprising that Annamaria suggested regional food varieties as one of her possible topics for the project. The relationship between this and her other suggestions—"economy" and "immigration in Italy"—became clear in the teacher-student conference. Annamaria explained she was interested in exploring a topic related to food, particularly pasta, because she wanted to open a pasta shop in San Francisco one day with her mother. As Borbala Gaspar told Annamaria that this was a possible topic in and of itself, Annamaria's eyes lit up and with a smile she said that she would love to do that more than any other idea she had. In her proposal, Annamaria positioned herself as an entrepreneur:

> For my oral presentation, I would like to construct a business outline of the feasibility of opening a traditional pasta shop in San Francisco. I am from the San Francisco Bay Area and hope to become a business owner one day. I am majoring in Business Management, and I feel that researching this topic

would allow me to connect Italian traditions with the hopes of opening my own pasta shop. It is something my family has always wanted to do, but life just seems to get too busy for anyone to start it. I think starting small would be best, but I believe that there is a good chance for expansion due to the demand for culture in the area.

Although her personal and familial connections to both the location and the Italian pasta trade are mentioned, they serve as a means of legitimizing her experience and expertise within the context of the business proposal. The 13 research questions she wrote on her proposal can be categorized into three areas: demand (Is there a demand?), product (What can be sold?), and budget (Is it feasible?), each of which is a typical component in a business plan. Relatedly, her initial findings offered a preliminary market analysis:

> Thus far, it appears that Italian culture is widely celebrated in San Francisco and there are many restaurants with high ratings. I also found that there are a decent amount of fresh pasta shops, about six, in the city; however, it seems that they are delis that sell fresh, packaged pasta—not fresh pasta you can buy by the pound. It also seems like, even in Italy, people are moving away from tradition and opening pasta shops with a modernized twist.

Annamaria's stated intention to open a traditional pasta shop is thus presented as something that would fill a niche missing in San Francisco's current business landscape.

Similar to the proposal, her presentation took the form of a business plan. Notably, the text on the title slide, "Un Pezzo d'Italia a San Francisco" (A piece of Italy in San Francisco), was stylized in the colors of the Italian flag, which are also often used to symbolize Italian cuisine in business logos in the United States.

Figure 2

Annamaria's Opening Slide
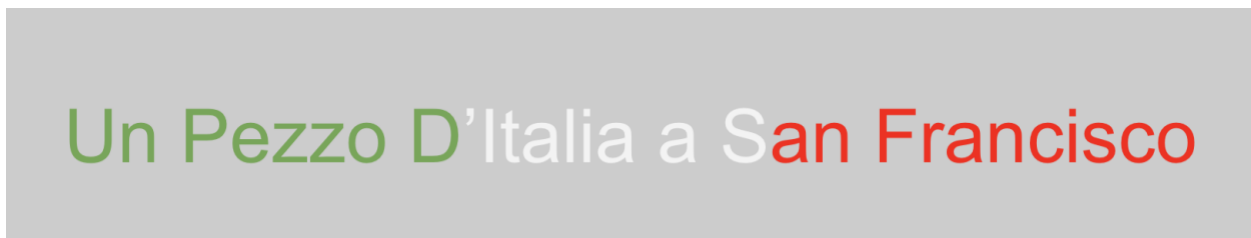
The first slide described her motivations for choosing this topic, grounding them in her business major, her career goals, and her family connection: "All'università studio economia e commercio perché voglio aprire un negozio di pasta fresca con la mia mamma" (At the university I am studying economics and business because I want to open a fresh pasta shop with my mother). The following slide explained the reasoning behind San Francisco, noting that it was her hometown and a place that has an "apprezzamento per le varie culture" (an appreciation for different cultures). The remaining slides were organized around the three themes from the proposal: product, feasibility, and demand. They also included a comparison of the relative costs of different pasta types in Italy and the United States, framed as a sort of market analysis. "In Italia, i prezzi della pasta di una scatola sono meno costosi d'America" (In Italy, the price for a packet of pasta is cheaper than in America), she noted. She then laid out a rough budget for opening a store in San Francisco, including the cost of rent, machinery, utilities, and advertising costs. Toward the end of the presentation, she returned to the local context of San Francisco, including an image of a trolly decorated with Italian flags moving through the city, thus positioning Italian culture as an essential element of the city.

Annamaria's final slides transitioned into an interactive activity. She had brought the idea of an in-class pasta-making demonstration to Borbala Gaspar earlier in the semester, and across a series of GroupMe messages, planned every aspect of the presentation, right down to the waterproof tablecloths. With support

from Borbala Gaspar, she also applied for a mini grant to offset supply costs. At the start of the application, Annamaria took on a somewhat unique positioning, emphasizing her family history:

> In 1955, equipped with a rolling pin, a carton of eggs and a bowl of flour, Young Teresa Costantini decided that her innate talent of cooking would free the people she loved. Mastering the art of homemade pastas, she began working with several other women. Costanza is rolling out table sized sheets of pasta and hand cutting each individual piece. Three children later, she moved from a small Italian town to San Francisco with her family and began working in a popular restaurant in Menlo Park, California. Head Chef at Dal Baffo, her authentic Italian cooking was in high demand and hit multiple headlines.

Although this description is personal in tone, it also echoes the stories often found in family-owned restaurant homepages and menus. Thus, the narrative in the grant is marked by a shift to a more personal footing, but it can also be understood as strategic and fitting for a business application. Later in the application, Annamaria described her motivation for the project as not only career-oriented, but also rooted in a desire to honor her grandmother by igniting "a passion and appreciation for Italian food culture and preparation in my fellow classmates." Annamaria echoed these sentiments in her interview, noting, "I want to kind of keep the tradition alive because I feel like it's a dying art."

Figure 3

Annamaria's Introduction to Making Pasta
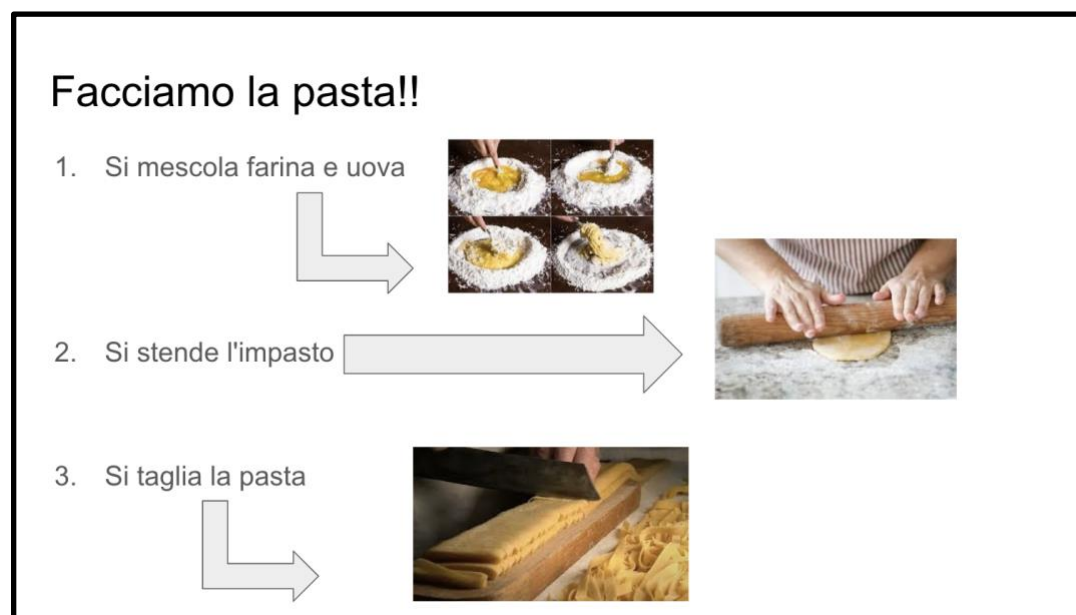
Annamaria's choices in the presentation and the grant application foregrounded her position as a future small business owner, but her reflections on the pasta demonstration indicate that her motivations were not primarily financial; instead they were driven by something that was meaningful to her from her family history.

In class, Annamaria created a station for each student with a rolling pin and ingredients. She led the class through the steps in making tagliatelle pasta (see Figure 4). At the same time, she played a video of an Italian American grandmother showing her grandson how to make fresh pasta.

Figure 4

Images of Students Making Pasta

In the interview, Annamaria noted that this experience and her classmates' responses made her proud: "During the presentation I would say that I felt most confident when I saw everyone's smiles on their face when they were like making the pasta when it started to come together, and they realized oh my gosh I just made pasta!" Annamaria described this as sharing a part of herself: "you know, it is part of me and like how I grew up." The impact of this presentation on the others in the class was clear in the post-project surveys in which students overwhelmingly cited Annamaria's as the most memorable presentation. In the class GroupMe chat, several students posted images from their attempts to recreate the experience by making pasta at home.

In the interview Annamaria revealed that, although she had grown up with Italian culture, she had appreciated the opportunity to research and to learn more: "And it makes me want to go over there like so much more than I already do and just learn firsthand and be like submerged in the whole culture." She also stated that she now intended to go to Italy after graduation and attend culinary school there. The project at first gave Annamaria a chance to think concretely about a dream she had for her future, but at the same time, it allowed her to explore her own sense of heritage and to try to connect these into a single story.

Clara: "Like I was there again"

Clara was a non-traditional student and had already demonstrated that she was highly motivated to learn Italian. At the time of the study, when Clara was in her senior year of undergraduate studies, she had just been accepted into a graduate program for archaeology. The summer before, Clara had had a chance to do fieldwork in Orvieto, Italy as part of a university summer abroad program. In her pre-project survey, Clara wrote that she wanted to continue to explore the Etruscans, and the additional topics she listed only added more specificity to this by naming particular sites like the archaeology of Orvieto and the tombs of the Etruscans. As possible questions to explore in her research she wrote that she wanted to show pictures that she had taken in Orvieto and to reconstruct archaeological work for the other students. She thus approached the project as a chance to deepen her knowledge, but even more so as an opportunity to share expertise and experiences that she had recently acquired. In her research proposal Clara laid out a detailed plan:

> The first component is to show the students how charming and historically authentic this city is. My intent is to show my fellow students how wonderful it is to study Italian in this hilltop village. The second part of my presentation will be an exploration of the Etruscan culture since Orvieto was an Etruscan strong holding in the Classical world. The third section of my presentation will be to show the students something about how archaeologists work.

The repetition of the phrase "show the students" puts the emphasis on her classmates rather than her own learning and positions Clara as the expert-educator. Beyond her personal connection to the site, Clara also noted that "this quaint city is an ideal place to practice and improve one's Italian. Plus, archaeology is a vibrant part of the fabric of Italian life." The choice of the word "quaint" directly echoes promotional material used for the program, with which Clara aligns herself here.

The two viewpoints taken in her proposal, the autobiographical and the education/promotional, can be also seen in the design choices Clara made in her presentation. Clara's opening slide includes a panoramic view of Orvieto with the text "Alta su un enorme blocco di tufo c'è una città storica, Orvieto" (High on a huge block of tuff is a historic city, Orvieto). The next two slides introduce the topic of the Etruscans and the guiding questions for the presentation. Three of the four images included on these slides feature Clara posing at the archaeological site. In two of them she is actively engaged in the dig. The remaining image is a pot assembled from shards and taped together. Although first personhood is absent from the language on these slides, the images work to establish what follows as knowledge gained not from distanced research, but from time spent on site. This was also something Clara discussed in her interview. When asked why she also included images of herself, she said, "I wanted to show them this is what I did, and I also wanted to inspire them that you too can do this. You can go to Italy for summer and speak Italian."

The first part of Clara's presentation was an introduction to Etruscan society, highlighting places of interest in Orvieto. Many of the images in these slides continued to convey a somewhat distanced perspective. They included six maps of the region, 11 images of objects, and seven panoramic images of places in Orvieto. These maps and images are reminiscent of a travel guide or brochure introducing the viewer to the town. The position of tour guide was also adopted by Clara in her spoken language. For example, she transitioned into the second slide, saying, "Ok andiamo ad Orvieto" (let's go to Orvieto).

Eight additional images, which were spread across the slides, visually enacted a guided tour of Orvieto by moving between photographs composed with a one-point perspective where the viewer is positioned looking straight into a street or other city space. This creates an almost first-person point of view, inviting viewers to imagine themselves in the space represented by the image (Serafini, 2014, pp. 63-65). Figure 5 includes examples of two types of images. The two bottom images feature archaeological artifacts absent of context, as they might appear in a museum. The top left and top right images are representative of the one-point perspective images, which position the viewers as occupying a three-dimensional space. The top center image includes elements of this perspective but, like the panoramic images, it is also more distanced. As Clara moved between these slides, she described the streets that she followed as she moved from the outskirts of Orvieto to downtown, where the Etruscan tombs are. Her virtual tour speech was simultaneously illustrated with her own photographs.

Figure 5

Sample Images from Carla's Presentation

After simulating a virtual guide to the tombs for the class, Carla introduced an activity that put students in the role of archaeologists. From a thrift store, she had bought ten miscellaneous pieces of pottery (plates, bowls, etc.) and broke them each into a few pieces. Each group was given a small bag with pottery parts—not all originating from the same vessel (see Figure 6)—and she explained how this simulated the experience of doing fieldwork. In the background, she played a video showing the archeological site of Orvieto and an interview with the Italian director of the archeological site in Orvieto. The ambient noise of Italian and pieces of broken shards clanging along with the images of Orvieto in the video gave the classroom the feel of a bustling archaeological site.

Figure 6

Carla's In-Class Activity

Carla's final presentation slide featured two images taken from the point of view of a person sitting at an outdoor cafe table—one looking down at a piece of cake and cup of coffee and one gazing down the street ahead (see Figure 6). Carla told the class that this is the cafe where they would get a snack after working at the dig. The text above the images was addressed in the second person: "Dopo una giornata allo scavo, si può bere un caffè con una fetta della torta al limone!" (After a day of excavation, you can have a coffee with a slice of lemon cake!).

Figure 7

Cafe Slides from Carla

Like Annamaria, Clara worked with Borbala Gaspar to write a mini grant application for materials. In the application narrative, Clara connected the interactive part of the presentation to her future career plans, which would include designing outreach activities such as this. She also mentioned that she had previously worked as a middle school teacher in the past and felt that she "definitely was interacting with [her classmates] as my teacher self." Thus, while she initially articulated her motivations as reflective, looking back on experiences that she had in the past, she also connected these experiences into a story with her future as a professional archaeologist who would be involved in education and outreach.

Discussion and Implications

For the students in this study, the project-based unit was an opportunity to explore not only a topic of interest to them but a set of possible relationships to Italian culture and society. Tommaso experimented with the position of Italian scholar in his talk but what was even more meaningful for him was the discovery of the Pulcinellean as an everyday philosophy for life. Annamaria saw the project as an opportunity to conduct research related to her career plans as a future small business owner, but, moreover, it allowed her to create a narrative connecting her familial history with an imagined future as a culinary expert engaged in reviving the "dying art" of Italian pasta-making. Finally, Carla's topic choice grew from a desire to recount a set of experiences from her summer studying and working as an archaeologist in Italy; but over the course of the project, she wove in this and her past and future identification as an educator. Importantly, each of these students did this in part by transforming the space of the classroom and virtualizing the bodies there (Urry, 2007)—inviting others to embody Pulcinella, engage in the cross-generational sharing of pasta-making practices, and experience a day of archaeological fieldwork in Orvieto, Italy.

Although the students in this study were chosen because they fulfilled certain impersonal criteria (i.e., completing the project in full and reporting that they deeply reflected on the material), it is likely no coincidence that they all had personal connections with the language they were learning. It is also noteworthy that while all three students also linked their projects in some way to their majors or future career plans, their engagement was not primarily instrumental. Rather, the more academic literacy activities like research and presentation were transformed into "hopeful" literacy practices—that is, ways of making sense of not only what has been and what is but also what could be (Pahl & Rowsell, 2020, p. 92).

A clear limitation of this study is that it draws from a very small number of highly engaged student participants who each had prior familial relationships to Italian. Although other students would certainly bring different sets of experiences to the project, the case studies suggest the significant piece was that it was the chance to "restory" (Pahl & Rowsell, 2020, pp. 29-30) these connections in new ways through a range of literacy practices, including linguistic, auditory, and tactile elements. This has implications for the kinds of project-based learning offered in language curricula. Following the idea of living literacies, this study shows how projects can integrate familiar academic literacy practices such as proposals, abstracts, and presentations, while also connecting to maker practices and the multisensory forms of experiencing and knowing they afford. Longer blocks of time and opportunities for experimentation, dialogue, and reflection seemed to also help enable a "what if" frame of mind (Pahl & Rowsell, 2020, p. 157), within which learners can explore and develop their emerging transcultural subjectivities in ways that extend beyond the space and time of our curricula.

Future longitudinal research would be helpful in determining how long lasting and transformative the impact of this project was for the students—both in the role of the researcher/designer and of audience members for each other's presentations. Additional research that considers a wider range of students, including those who were perhaps less engaged, who did not complete the project, and who have different prior histories with the language and culture being studied, could expand upon this study by examining the potential impact of such constraints. Additionally, our analysis suggests that future research in literacy and LC2 learning must continue to try to grasp the role that multisensory, less text-centered dimensions of literacy play in the development of multilingual subjectivities (Leander & Boldt, 2013), which will also entail new modes of analysis that can capture non-representational aspects of literacy activities.

Based on the three case studies, this article argues for the potential of project-based learning as a way of deliberately making space for the kinds of relationships to language and culture learning fostered through affective literacy practices. By pursuing work in LC2 research and practice that embraces the complexity of literacy in this way, we can continue to engage students as social actors but also as whole humans with bodies, hearts, and senses.

Acknowledgment

Notes

1. Both authors contributed equally to this work.

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Appendix. Project Materials

Project Instructions

Throughout the course you will work on a project of your choice that you will research and learn more about. This topic can be based on your personal interest. The first step is to think about a topic that you would like to choose. The following are questions that can help you make this decision: Do you have any hobbies? Do you volunteer anywhere? Do you want to find out if there is a similar group of interest in Italy? Do you want to present to a sorority/fraternity house or connect your project to it somehow? Do you want to connect your major to Italian? Or do you simply want to search and find interesting information?

Before completing, submitting, and presenting your project, you will complete several steps: (a) Scaffolding your topic interest with peers and with me and constructing possible research questions; (b) writing a proposal and finding resources; (c) correcting your proposal based on the received feedback; (d)

looking at project example slides and evaluating them with your peers; (e) carry out your research, read, take notes, write and discuss your preliminary findings during class project discussions; (f) create your slides and presentation; (g) create an activity for the class; (h) make corrections to your slides; (i) practice your presentation; (j) present your project.

Proposal Description

A research proposal (2–3 pages) is a plan or research design (for your pre-approved topic) that covers:

1. **Introduction:** Explanation of the reasons why you selected this topic and your connection to it.
2. **Research questions:** Specific questions that address particular details about a topic that you would like to explore. You should not be already familiar with the selected topic. At least 5 research questions must be included. When you decide on a topic think about information you (and most likely your classmates) do not know yet and therefore, you would like to research it to find out more.
3. **Resources and evaluation:** List of resources that you plan to use to answer your research questions. At least 10 resources must be used; resources might include videos, websites, social networks, books, magazines, etc. For each resource explain how it will help you answer your research question.
4. **Findings:** A brief description of what you have found based on your initial research on the topic.
5. **Goal:** What you hope to achieve with this research project (implications for classmates/outcomes).
6. **Class-engaging activities:** Explanation of how you are planning to assure that the class is engaged throughout your presentation and that they are learning from you. What tools are you   planning to use to engage them? You may bring items to class, handouts, visuals, or prepare brief activities, handouts or group quizzes, etc.

Rubric for Proposal

_____/30 points	5	3	2
Introduction	Well formulated introduction that includes a clear explanation of the importance of the research topic and provides connection to personal interest.	General introduction, includes explanation of the importance of the research topic. There is connection to personal interest, however there is room for improvement.	Introduction lacks focus, there is no clear explanation why the student selected the topic. The connection between the project and the author is missing.
Research questions and evaluation	Very clearly stated questions that are specific rather than general. Questions are promising in resulting of original and interesting research findings.	Clearly stated questions, however they are rather general and not specifically focused.	Less than 5 questions. Questions are general and not focused. Lack of details in the questions.
Resources	Resources are versatile (videos, different articles, blogs, social media or else), each resource is	Resources are rather limited and partially relate to the research	Less than 10 resources. Research questions do not

	for a different /similar aspect and it is in correspondence with the research questions. It shows from the proposal that you started to critically evaluate resources and pair them to your research questions.	questions. It is somehow understandable how they will be used to answer the research questions.	seem related to the selected resources. Resources are confusing and not critically selected for the project.
Findings	You outlined initial findings that are new to you and for most of your classmates.	Initial findings are outlined but rather general.	Initial findings are not clearly explained.
Goal	Goals for this research project are clearly stipulated.	Goals for this research project are stated, but rather general.	Goals for this research project are vague and not clear.
Class-engaging activities	It is clear how the author plans to assure that the class is engaged throughout the presentation and that others will learn new concepts. It is clearly explained what tools the author will use in the presentation. It is specified if the author will bring items to class, handouts, visuals, or brief activities or group quiz and how they will be used.	It is somehow understandable how the author will engage with others. There is no explanation of what tools will be used during the presentation.	No engaging activities are included in the presentation proposal.

Rubric for Presentation Slides

Presentation Slides __/50 POINTS	**Exemplary: 5-4 points**	**Proficient: 3-2 points**	**Not proficient: 1-0 point**
Introduction	The introduction connects the presenter with the chosen topic and spikes interest. It draws the audience into the presentation with well formulated questions or other creative ways such as brief quizzes, meaningful graphics or sounds.	The introduction somehow connects to the presenter and partially engages the audience with some superficial questions.	The introduction is basic and it is not clear how it connects with the presenter. The audience is not involved in the introduction.

Use of primary resources in content	From the slides it is clear that the student: »synthesized research »shows critical thinking skills »all resources are logically connected to each other (not a list of information) »use of quotes is minimal »all resources are listed on the references slides.	From the slides it appears that the student: »partially synthesized research »did not show critical thinking skills »somehow connected resources although it is not completely evident »use of quotes is minimal »all resources are listed on the references slides.	In the slides it appears that the student: »copied and pasted the information from the resources or just added information without synthesizing it »did not show critical thinking skills »the content is disconnected and/or many quotes are used »some resources are missing on the reference page.
Content depth and transition	The topic is covered extensively and includes many details. It uses advanced vocabulary from the course as well as from external resources. Tools are used creatively and extensively. The information provided flows well from a slide to the next one.	The topic is sometimes covered throughout, and other times covered superficially. Some of the vocabulary from the course is used. It seems that some information is lacking, and tools are only used briefly.	Only few details are provided with basic and not varied vocabulary. No tools are used. The content presented looks like a "grocery list" with no depth or connections.
Content accuracy and comprehensibility	There was plenty of supporting information, evidence, images, etc. to make the presenter's point. Content is clear and easy to understand.	There was a fair amount of supporting information, but it was somewhat sparse. The presenter sufficiently provided content in support of the topic.There are some parts that are not easy to understand.	The content is presented superficially, and it does not seem accurate. The presenter did not provide content in support of the topic.There are many parts that are not easy to understand.
Originality and creativity	Originality and creativity of the student is clearly visible. The student used attractive and meaningful pictures or other creative ways to present the topic. Fonts, colors, etc. seemed well chosen to reflect the presenter's purpose and aided in the ability to process the visual content of the presentation.	Originality and creativity of the students is somewhat visible. The student took somewhat advantage of interesting fonts, colors images or other creative ways to present the topic. However, they are sometimes inconsistent and sometimes they did not help in understanding the content.	Originality and creativity is lacking. The student does not show any originality or creativity. Slides are basic and superficial.

Pictures, videos & background	Pictures and videos are labeled and are well integrated and have a specific meaning/function in the presentation. Pictures are not use solely for decorative purposes. The background enhances the presentation.	Pictures, videos and background may not be distracting from the content, however they did not enhance the presentation and comprehensibility. Some pictures are just decorative.	The layout and color choices distracted from the content of the presentation. Some of the images were purely decorative and seemed out of place.
Clarity	The presented content can be easily seen and read. The amount of text on the slides is not overwhelming. The presentation flows logically.	Some parts in the presentation are readable; others unclear due to too much or too little information on the slides.	The presentation is unclear. The information presented is very hard to read and incomprehensible.
Engaging resources and activities for classmates	The presenter included engaging resources and tools to interact with classmates. Engaging resources are not just questions/answers but they rather include reflective and collaborative activities that engage creatively all members of the class throughout the presentation.	The presenter included only a few engaging activities, although they are mostly in the question/answer format without collaboration and reflection opportunities. The presenter did not engage creatively all members of the class throughout the presentation.	No engaging or very minimal resources and activities are included in the slides.
Primary resources	Contains a variety of at least 12 resources that come from Italian websites. These resources are used throughout the presentation. It is clear that these resources were selected with care and for a purpose. Selected resources shows an attempt to provide a well developed research.	Contains a variety of at least 10 resources that come from Italian websites. These resources are used throughout the presentation. It is clear that most of these resources were selected with care and for a purpose. Selected resources do not always show an attempt to provide a well developed research.	Contains a variety of at least 8 resources that come from Italian websites. Not all these resources are not used throughout the presentation. Selected resources do not show an attempt to provide a well developed research.
Knowledge gained/ Findings	The presentation and the findings have a clear focus, there is a clear take home message. It is a great synopsis of personal research, it is	Presentation loses focus at times, providing a lot of information on different areas, the take home message isn't clear. It has a good synapsis	The audience is not able to understand how the findings relate to the presentation. There is no take home message and the presenter clearly did

	clear that the presenter spent a lot of time researching the topic and the slides are organized and presented in a manner that facilitates learning for all members of the classroom.	and shows that the presenter did research the topic. The slides are organized and presented in a manner that in most cases facilitates learning for all members of the classroom.	not research the topic. The slides are organized and presented in a manner that does not facilitate learning for all members of the classroom.

About the Authors

Borbala Gaspar is a Lecturer of Italian at the University of Arizona. Her research focuses on how (underrepresented) language learners maneuver through social and symbolic power as they gain agency, use imagination, and engage in pedagogies such as project-based learning, task-based learning, and (multi)literacies.

Email: bgaspar@email.arizona.edu

Chantelle Warner is Associate Professor of German and Second Language Acquisition and Teaching at the University of Arizona, where she also co-directs the Center for Educational Resources in Culture, Language and Literacy (CERCLL). Her research focuses on how language is involved in struggles for social and symbolic power and the educational potential of playful language use.

Email: warnerc@email.arizona.edu