

Notes for FIG Meetings – Topic: Technology in Language Learning

1/31/14 – Initial Planning Meeting

Members attending:

1. Cameron Lougee
2. Karin Almquist
3. Valerie Metcalf
4. Vanessa Pepe

In this meeting we discussed our goals for the FIG and how we could achieve them within the 5 week/one-hour-per-meeting time frame. We had some ambitious goals and each individual had her/his own ideas of what we wanted to accomplish. This meeting served as an opportunity to hash these out and to define and refine our FIG's goals.

A central focus that arose from this initial discussion was the relevance of the work of Julie Sykes, the Director of CASLS (Center for Applied Second Language Studies) at the University of Oregon. Karin Almquist and I had met with her the previous week to request that she participate in our FIG. She has been developing language-learning video games and recently published a book about the topic titled *Language at Play*. We all agreed that it made sense to read her book before our next meeting, and that during that meeting, each of us would present a specific chapter to the group.

Beyond using our budget to purchase five copies of her book, we also discussed possible ideas for how to use the remaining funds allotted to the FIG.

2/14/14 – Presentation of Chapters from *Language at Play*.

Members attending: All

In this meeting we discussed our initial reactions to the text and each offered some insight. We each presented one of the chapters from the text to initiate further and more in-depth discussion.

We were all generally excited by all of the available (and soon to be available) technology that can be used in a language learning context. One thing that interested all of us was how we could use technology to give faster feedback to the students and make their materials more interactive, authentic and effective. We pondered the question whether this technology could eventually replace the textbook.

One major concern shared by all FIG members was specific to our specific demographic: the community college student. One thing that we all seemed to agree upon was that in the community college environment budgets are very tight. To implement technology based curriculums would require additional funding to be approved, which could be an obstacle. Furthermore, students of this demographic typically do not have as much expendable income as the average university student.

Other concerns included the potential loss of the authentic, interpersonally communicative experiences that students need to become proficient in a second language. Many of us expressed doubts that this was achievable through technology-based learning exclusively.

Also at this meeting, we decided that we would like to buy and watch a webinar on technology in language learning to see if others in our field had encountered and/or addressed any of these issues. We also scheduled the next meetings.

2/21/14 – Webinar Event

***Members attending:**

- 1. Cameron Lougee**
- 2. Karin Almquist**
- 3. Valerie Metcalf**

For this meeting we watched the overview for an ACTFL Webinar called: *Technology: Putting the Learner out Front*. It was comprised of three very informative talks addressing how technology can meaningfully engage and empower learners to take responsibility for their learning. It also addressed the ways in which educators can make appropriate use of technology to enhance standards-based language learning.

This webinar featured presenters Kevin Gaugler from Marist College, Barbara Lindsey from University of Maryland and Bobby Hibgood from University of Maryland.

The webinar provided a great overview, but it took up most of the meeting time. This overview turned out to be free and we opted not to buy the full webinar, which ended up saving our FIG some funding.

*All members attended except Armand Gagnon and Vanessa Pepe; however, they agreed to watch the webinar from home.

Also at this meeting we refined out meeting schedule and budget.

3/13/14 – Julie Sykes Presentation

Members attending:

- 1. Cameron Lougee**
- 2. Karin Almquist**
- 3. Valerie Metcalf**
- 4. Armand Gagnon**

At this meeting we had our guest speaker, Julie Sykes, attend to lead a discussion and workshop on her book, *Language at Play*. We catered the meeting with coffee and breakfast. We also invited our Division Chair.

The workshop provided us an opportunity to address the issues raised during our previous discussion of her book. Julie addressed these, and also provided some useful suggestions and URLs to free online resources available. We were excited to learn that some of these are readily available, and that therefore we can implement them now, without needing to apply for funding through the UP process. We also discussed possible future professional development opportunities with CASLS, and the need for additional to identify sources of funding to make that a reality.

The presentation and workshop lasted an hour and a half, and instructors needed to leave to teach, so we did not have a chance to reflect on them as a group after Julie left.

3/18/14 – Final Meeting

Members attending: All

The purpose of the last meeting was to share our opinions and what we'd learned during the workshop with Julie Sykes, and to discuss our views of the entire FIG experience as a whole. In sum, we all found this introduction to new trends in using digital technologies in second-language instruction to be stimulating and instructive. More than anything, it made us realize how little we knew about the multiple ways the new technologies can be used in SLA. We feel that our inquiry barely scratched the surface of what's possible, and all of us are eager to continue our exploration.

In hindsight, we might have used our time more effectively if we had limited our inquiry to *one* area of this expansive and ever-changing field. It would have allowed for a more focused, in-depth study (for example, if we had strictly formed a study-group around "Language at Play.") However, given that for some in our group it was a first foray into exploring what technologies are "out there," we also recognize that it was very valuable to get an overview of what is going on in this vast area of digital learning throughout our field.

We especially appreciated the opportunity to come together as professionals to explore this new territory together, collaboratively.

Finally, we all agreed that there is a need for our language programs to evolve and adapt to the new technologies available to us. Since this would require some major curricular changes, it would be more appropriate for the respective lead instructors to initiate further investigation into this, apart from our FIG.

We used the remaining approved catering funds to cater this meeting. All members attended.