

BUILDING THE CAPACITY FOR TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION

AN INTERACTIVE PRESENTATION

*Emilie Cleret, French War College
Betty Lou Leaver, The Literary Center*

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

This presentation, drawing on successful transformative learning programs, has two goals: (1) sharing history and successes of foreign language transformative learning programs in both countries, and (2) planning ways to increase collaboration among foreign language faculty to bring the current buddings of transformative learning in foreign language educational programs for adults into full bloom. Four areas will be discussed: (1) programs for both physical and digital classrooms; (2) the similar challenges in securing the initial engagement of faculty, students, and leadership in programs in both countries; (3) utilizing publications within the foreign language education field as a mechanism for sharing practices and refining applications of transformative learning theory; and (4) joint brainstorming with participants to consolidate and expand networking opportunities among current and future practitioners of transformative teaching and learning in foreign language classrooms.

The presenters share the history of the programs and present pre- and post- comparative data, including student success rates, faculty feedback, and student satisfaction levels. Both programs are taught within military institutions: the US Defense Language Institute and Ecole de guerre (French War College). The programs reflect all levels of proficiency from absolute beginner through, ultimately, near-native: beginning and intermediate English and French (French War College) and intermediate and advanced levels Arabic, Chinese, Korean, Persian/Farsi, Russian, and Spanish (Defense Language Institute). While the specific experiences took place at government institutions, these institutions share commonalities with institutions of higher education that can benefit from lessons learned.

Specifics of each program will be discussed comparatively in terms of how the definition of transformative education took shape on each continent. Course elements included an open architecture approach to instruction, using nearly exclusively authentic materials (produced by and for native speakers), learning contracts, projects, written tasks, oral presentations, formal debates (including competitions), diagnostic/formative assessments, and host-country immersions in classrooms meant for native speakers and providing experiences that revealed cultural differences in thought, behavior, institutions, and educational practices. A hands-on activity will explore the influence of Vygotsky, Freire, Rogers, and Mezirow on these programs and identify ways in which these same influencers might prompt adaptations in foreign language programs at institutions of higher education. Incorporated into this activity will be a country-specific discussion of the countries represented by the participants, identifying an anticipated embracement or rejection of transformative andragogy. The intent is to include digital programs if digital teachers are present.

Following this activity, the presenters will identify the challenges they faced on the ground with students, teachers, and leadership unacquainted with transformative learning and the mechanisms used to reach consensus. These mechanisms included the use of transparency, adaptation, and training (e.g., the hybrid Advanced Language Academy at DLI, routinely attended by teachers from a number of institutions.)

The latter part of this session will focus on current and pending publications on transformative foreign language education, interactively identifying gaps. The presenters hope to encourage participants to form author collaboratives to begin producing literature to fill these gaps. A support mechanism in the form of the TL FLED (transformative learning in foreign language education) website, currently under development, will be provided to those authorial collaboratives that desire to use it.

The final activity seeks to build a coalition to introduce or refine transformative learning programs within higher education. Taking into account nascent university programs, the presenters will assist participants in preparing a draft 3-year strategic plan for development of adult education programs. Pursuant to this plan, immediate next steps will be identified by participants and realized through the networking capability of the TL FLED website, with the goal of meeting at a venue to be identified in 2020 to further refine activities.

SELECT REFERENCES

Cleret, E. (2018). Transformation at the learner, teacher, and instruction levels: One teacher's Story at the French War College. *Dialog on Language Instruction*, 28(1), 52-64.

Freire, P. (1970). *The pedagogy of the oppressed* (M. B. Ramos, Trans.). New York, NY: Continuum Books.

Leaver, B. L. & Cleret, E. (2018). Developing intercultural competence and idiocultural transformation in foreign language programs. In Welsch, M., Marsick, V., & Holt, D. (Eds.), *Building Transformative Community: Exacting Possibility in Today's Times: Proceedings of the XIII Biennial Transformative Learning Conference* (pp. 405-411). New York, NY: Teachers College, Columbia University.

Mezirow, J. & Taylor, E.W. (Eds.) (2009). *Transformative learning in practice: Insights from community, workplace and higher education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Rogers, C. (1986). *Freedom to learn: A view of what education might become* (2nd ed.). Indianapolis, IN: Merrill Publishing Company.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). Interaction between learning and development. In Cole, M et al. (Eds.), *Mind and society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard.

For further information, contact the lead presenter:

Emilie Cleret

Head of English

French War College

Case 46 – 1 place Joffre

75700 PARIS SP 07, France

Phone: +33 01 44 42 41 56

E-Mail: e.cleret@academie.defense.gouv.fr