



ACTFL
AMERICAN COUNCIL ON THE
TEACHING OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES

**SPECIAL
INTEREST
GROUP**

**LESS COMMONLY TAUGHT
LANGUAGES SIG**

SPRING/SUMMER 2023 NEWSLETTER

Highlights of the Spring/Summer Newsletter

This newsletter features two wonderful contributions by presenters at the National Council of Less Commonly Taught Languages (NCOLCTL) conference, held in Chicago in April 2023:

- An inter-institutional team of Vietnamese instructors highlights their virtual language tables program that they created – a creative solution to a lack of extra-curricular activities at their institutions. See “Collaborative Virtual Vietnamese Language Table” on p. 3 for the full article!
- Two scholars from Rice University discuss how they created “virtual and in-house opportunities that simulate a traditional study abroad experience” to help overcome barriers many students face to traditional study abroad. See “Study Abroad and Experiential Learning in the Post-pandemic Era” on p. 4-5.

We also feature an upcoming webinar on June 29, 2023 ([register here](#)) and information on how to get involved in the SIG! The officers welcome your ideas and contributions!



ACTFL
Language Connects

LESS COMMONLY TAUGHT
LANGUAGES (LCTL) **SIG**

OFFICERS

- Jonathan Ludwig, Oklahoma State University, Chair
- Shu-Chen Chen, University of Virginia, Vice Chair
- Mahmoud Ali, University of Arizona, Past Chair
- Emily Heidrich Uebel, Michigan State University, Secretary

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

- Volunteer as a SIG officer
- Post on the SIG Community
- Present a webinar for the SIG
- Share a resource on the Community
- Submit a proposal for the ACTFL Convention

HELPFUL LINKS

- <https://community.actfl.org/>
- <https://www.actfl.org/convention-and-expo>

THE LCTL SIG AT ACTFL 2023

The LCTL SIG will be featuring several sessions at this fall's ACTFL convention in Chicago, IL! Once the final program comes out, we will promote the SIG sessions on the SIG forum!

At least two of the SIG officers will be in attendance at the ACTFL 2023 convention – we look forward to seeing you there!

UPCOMING WEBINAR: JUNE 29, 2023

Join us for a webinar on June 29, 2023, at 3pm (Eastern) featuring the **National LCTL Resource Center and the ViVID Project**. This presentation will broadly highlight NLRC initiatives and then do a deep dive into an exciting professional development opportunity for LCTL instructors: the ViVID project!

Virtual Video-based Inquiry for the Development of LCTL Teachers (ViVID) invites cohorts of currently practicing LCTL instructors to engage in reflective teaching and peer-mentoring and is facilitated by the core faculty of MSU's Graduate Programs in Foreign Language Teaching.



Learn more about this project and how you can become one of the fellows in future years!

Register through the [ACTFL SIG Webinar Registration page](#) to join us for this webinar!

CALL FOR MEMBER SUBMISSIONS

Please submit an article of up to 500 words to share ideas (e.g., classroom activities, assessment ideas, educational technology you recommend, etc.) to Emily Heidrich Uebel (heidric6@msu.edu) by September 15th to be included in our fall newsletter.

We look forward to hearing from you!

HOW TO GET INVOLVED WITH THE LCTL SIG

The LCTL SIG is looking for speakers for webinars, future office holders, and volunteers to help us grow. To get involved, or to request more information on how to get involved, please contact any of the 2023 officers:

Chair: Jonathan Z. Ludwig, Oklahoma State University (jonathan.z.ludwig@okstate.edu)
Vice Chair: Shu-Chen Chen, University of Virginia (sc8u@virginia.edu)
Past Chair: Mahmoud Ali, University of Arizona (mahmoudali@arizona.edu)
Secretary: Emily Heidrich Uebel, Michigan State University (heidric6@msu.edu)

COLLABORATIVE VIRTUAL VIETNAMESE LANGUAGE TABLE: CONNECTING LEARNERS AND BUILDING A LEARNING COMMUNITY

An Sakach (Arizona State University), Trang Tran (Brown University), & ThuyAnh Nguyen (University of Michigan)

The Vietnamese Language Table (VLT) was initially formed in response to the challenges posed by the pandemic, which prevented students from participating in conversation hours or language tables in person. It was also a collaborative effort to overcome the lack of resources and personnel that hindered the organization of such extracurricular activities. Organized and facilitated by a dedicated group of volunteer Vietnamese lecturers, VLT has successfully addressed the aforementioned issues by providing virtual conversation hours for a large population of L2 Vietnamese students.

The VLT program offers meetings for three proficiency levels: Beginner (Novice-Intermediate Low), Intermediate (Novice High - Advanced Low), and Advanced (Intermediate High-Advanced High). Each month, there has been a meeting for each level, and students could join any VLT session of their interest. Following the principles proposed by Leeser and White (2016), we aimed to create tasks that foster interpersonal communication, closely resemble real-life communication, and utilize students' or other authentic L2 input sources as informational sources. These tasks are designed with manageable steps and include linguistic support and follow-up activities. A typical language table session includes warm-up activities, breakout room activities, collaborative tasks, and a post-session follow-up.

Furthermore, we aim to create an 'ecology', or community, of learners. The VLT team has kept all students updated with its activities by posting information about past and future events on a [website](#). Students from each group receive emails before each of the events with information about the language table sessions. Activities in each session have been archived on the web page for each level (using Padlet for the [Beginner](#) and [Intermediate](#) groups and Blogspot for the [Advanced](#) group so that anyone can visit and recap the sessions). Teachers are also able to access the [VLT website](#) in order to get ideas for oral communicative tasks or remake and adapt the available Padlet for their classrooms.

Since Spring 2022, the VLT team has been collaborating to build a virtual community that stays connected and practices speaking Vietnamese. We hope our work can inspire other LCTL teachers to collaborate to create a stronger community of learners.

References

Leeser, M. & White, J. (2016). *Interactive tasks*. New York: Routledge.

STUDY ABROAD AND EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING IN THE POST-PANDEMIC ERA

Hélade Scutti Santos, Ph.D. (Rice University) & Hossam Elsherbiny, Ph.D. (Rice University)

Studying abroad is traditionally considered the only way in which learners can be fully immersed in the target language and culture, thereby sharpening their linguistic skills, intercultural awareness, and engaging in experiential learning. However, if the inability to join a SA program prior to the pandemic was arguably only limited to undocumented students and those coming from low-income families, the widespread travel restrictions in the wake of the pandemic has affected the greater student population. As travel restrictions were gradually lifted, the issue was compounded by inflation. Data released in March 2021 by The Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration, in partnership with the New American Economy, shows that 86% of students indicated that inflation has negatively impacted their ability to pay for their study abroad. As a result and in an effort to ensure more equitability and inclusiveness, Rice University's Center for Languages and Intercultural Communication (CLIC) decided to launch a number of virtual and in-house opportunities that simulate a traditional SA experience.

- **Language consultants** - CLIC hires undergraduate and graduate students who have native or near-native fluency in one of the languages we teach. Faculty require regular meetings with language consultants in which students can practice the language and learn more about the culture. Students enjoy the ability to interact with fluent speakers of the language who are their peers and share similar interests.
- **Virtual language exchange with international institutions** - Many CLIC faculty have established partnerships with universities from other countries for language exchange opportunities. Typically, students speak half of the time in English and the other half in the target language. Jessica Morones, CLIC Spanish instructor, established partnerships with several universities, targeting students who share the same academic and personal interests. This is an activity that can easily be applied to any LCTL.
- **Internship and community service** - Being in a large metropolis has opened the opportunity to partner with local organizations, businesses or with consulates to provide community service options to our students.
- **Interactions with members of the international community in Houston** - Hélade Scutti Santos created a project with the local Lusophone community in Houston in which each family "adopted" a



couple of students for a semester. Students initially invited the families for an event at Rice, and they continued interacting throughout the semester. The families then received the students in their homes for a meal.

- **Summer courses with an immersion component** - In the summer of 2022, instead of canceling our Rice in Japan program due to travel restrictions, our Japanese instructor, Naoko Ozaki, took advantage of the various facilities available on campus to simulate an immersion program. Throughout their summer, students engaged in a variety of activities, including cooking, consuming meals together, interacting with speakers of the language, visiting the Japanese Consulate, etc. In their course evaluations, 90% of the students rated the quality of the course as outstanding, and the same percentage rated the course organization also as outstanding.

While these efforts may not be the only, and much less the best, way to reconceptualize language immersion experiences in the post-pandemic era and mitigate financial and legal challenges that hinder our students' ability to study overseas, the positive feedback that we received from our students confirms their worthiness and encourages us to explore similar activities.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES AND RESOURCES

Many of the USA's [Language Resource Centers](#) and [National Resource Centers](#) have professional development opportunities. While we can't list all options, here are some select upcoming opportunities that may be interesting to LCTL instructors:

- [CARLA](#)'s has many [summer institutes](#) for professional development.
 - If you are interested in their summer 2024 opportunities, keep in mind that there is a [scholarship for LCTL instructors](#)!
- [CERCLL](#) is holding the [International Conference on the Development and Assessment of Intercultural Competence](#) in February 2024 - the call for papers closes **July 21, 2023**.
- The [NALRC](#) has [summer institutes](#), focused on instructors of African languages.
- The [NFLRC](#) is offering a [Chinese Online Language Pedagogy Summer Workshop](#) in late June - registration deadline is **June 23, 2023**.
- The [NLRC](#) offers [Online Language Teaching courses](#) on Teaching the Whole Class: Technology for Differentiated Instruction (apply by June 26th)