

WL: Personalization

Brianne Leia Jackson & Patricia Yu



9.1 The Importance of Personalization in a World Language Classroom

When we personalize our world language classes, we are able to tailor language acquisition to best meet students where they are.

As mentioned in the earlier chapters, world language students vary widely in their abilities not only in their native language, which may or may not be English, but also in their ability to memorize new vocabulary and verb tenses, in their comprehension of sentence structure, or just their overall exposure to a culture outside their own. These students may be on different reading levels or may even have differing levels of speech production, both of which are valuable components of language acquisition. Some have strong skills in writing; others do not. Others might have strong translation or vocabulary identification skills but not know how to communicate their ideas in either writing or speaking.

Because students vary in essential world language acquisition skills, personalization becomes a way to help students develop their strengths and overcome their weaknesses. It allows students to focus their attention on areas where they can really grow and not spend time doing exercises in areas they have already mastered. It allows students to use their time efficiently for their own growth. It can also help students gain confidence in their ability to communicate in a variety of different media and in their ability to have something to contribute.

World language learning is unique in that the goals are the same regardless of language or level students are in, there are many ways they can achieve various language goals. Depending on the language, there are a number of nuances that can cause students to falter; however, by utilizing data from blended learning, you can personalize the student experience, so that each student experiences growth.

For example, the data might indicate that a student is struggling with the formation of verbs in various tenses. In a blended setting, those students may be able to engage with various conjugation applications to further their practice. You may discover that students are struggling with certain vocabulary with similar meanings. The technologies available in a blended setting can help students by presenting visual cues, such as images or videos, to help with the comprehension and retention of the language. Given the number of common mistakes associated with world language acquisition, especially for English-speaking American students that begin this journey much later than their international counterparts, personalization through blended learning can lead to greater fluency in the target language.

It is helpful to approach personalization and the idea of student control in two different ways: through allowing students to personalize along the dimensions of personalization and through allowing students to personalize learning

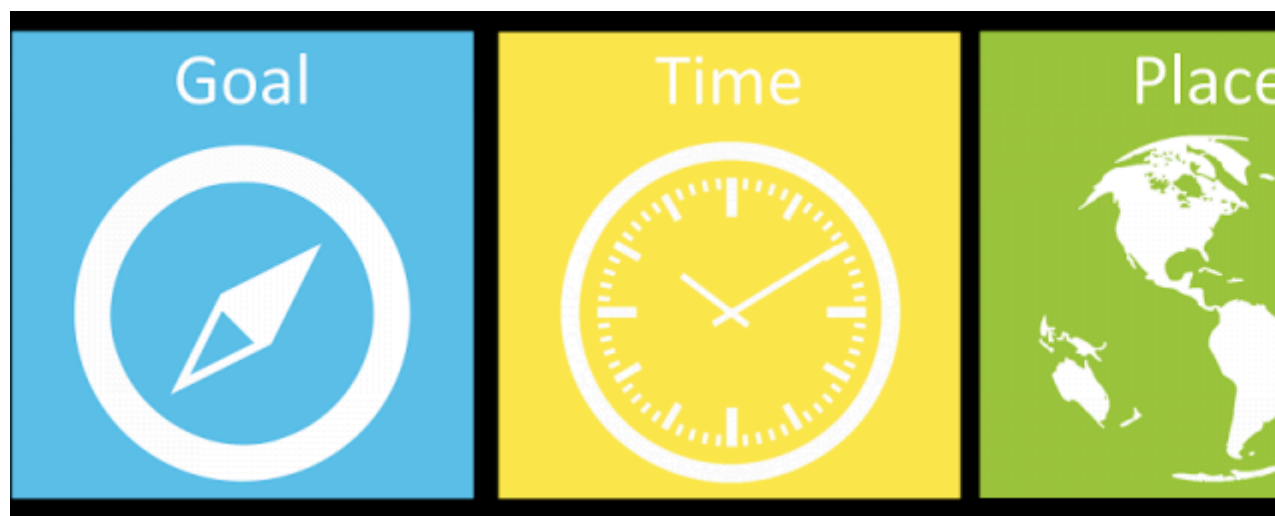
objectives, assessments, and activities we use in our teaching.

9.2 Personalization Dimensions in a World Language Classroom

One way to think about personalization is to examine the ways students can personalize. The five dimensions of personalized learning are guidelines for ways or methods we can apply to allow our students to personalize their learning. These dimensions are goals, time, place, pace, and/or path.

Figure 1

Five Dimensions of Personalized Learning



In the sections below we will explore each of these dimensions.

7.2.1 Personalizing Goals

Goals are a means of making choices specific and purposeful. Facilitating goal setting increases student ownership of their learning, encourages lifelong learning skills and attitudes, and increases motivation and self-regulation abilities.

In order for students to personalize their goals, you and they need to understand something of their needs and proficiencies as world language learners. This is where you can use the data you have gathered from the activities mentioned in the Data Practices chapter.

Information from such sources helps you understand where students are in their world language abilities, skills, and aptitudes. Learning outcomes and standards give focus for where students are expected to be. The difference between where students are and the course outcomes is the place for growth—and goals.

In 2017 the the National Council of State Supervisors for Languages (NCSSFL) and the The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) adopted a means of goal setting for World Languages students, called the “Can Do” statements. These statements were designed to guide students, world language educators and other stakeholders to align with the Interpretive, Interpersonal, and Presentational Modes of Communication as described in the World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages. For more information on these standards and how to incorporate them into your goal-setting in your blended learning, please visit: <https://www.actfl.org/resources/ncssfl-actfl-can-do-statements>

Goals are not goals if they are just aspirations. Writing goals down and tracking them are important processes for achieving them. Here are a few ideas about goal setting conferences and how they might be used in a world languages classroom.

In Class

- Teach and discuss the purpose for setting goals.
- Help students develop a growth mindset; create a culture of growth.
- Introduce a goal setting process such as SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound)

Conferencing (regular goal setting meetings)

- Some teachers meet with a few students a day or a week, taking several weeks to meet with every student.
- Others plan a station or lab rotation, where students are working independently, then pull students out individually for a short consultation.
- Use these conferences to review current data and areas of growth.
 - Discuss growth in content areas.
 - You may also want to allow students to practice making goals outside the scope of your learning outcomes, such as personal health; interpersonal goals; self-regulation goals.
- Invite the student to evaluate where new growth can take place in your content area and make goals for that growth.
- Record progress toward previous goals and new goals. Include a chart to help students visualize progress. This may be developed in either the native or target language.

Monitoring (tracking progress between conferences)

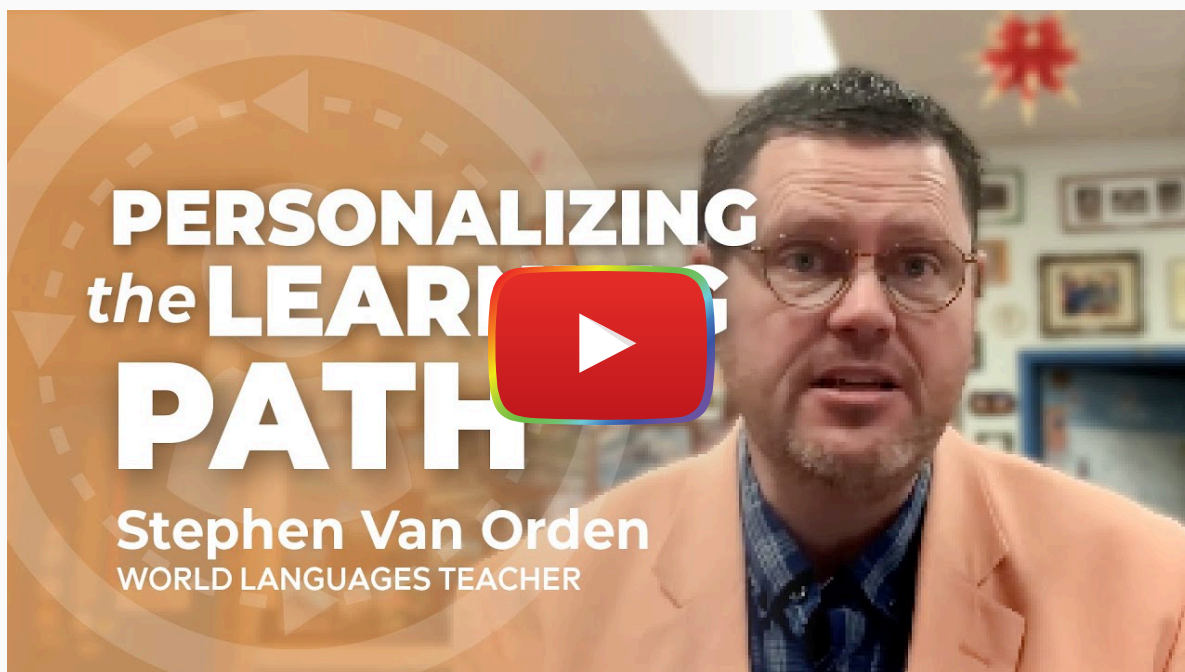
- Pair and share—place students in pairs (which either you or the students choose). The students share their goals with each other weekly and help their partner revise the goals if necessary. They also report their progress in either the native or target language.
- Students can keep an online daily or weekly journal in which they reflect on and record their progress toward their goals or struggles they are having. Teachers check in weekly and address individual student needs in either the native or target language.
- Students turn in an online exit ticket daily in either the native or target language, reporting that day's progress, struggles, or need for help.
- Create charts, again in either the native or target language, to record student progress during the year.

7.2.2 Personalizing Path

When you allow student to personalize their learning path in your classroom, your students are not all doing the same assessments and activities. You may find that you have become a curator of resources and activities that will best help your students. These resources/activities can be compiled in playlists or choiceboards, which give the students choice about the order in which they complete the activities or about which activities they choose to do.

The development of the choiceboards themselves can also allow for students to have even more exposure to not only the target language but also to the grammar terminology that often eludes world language students. By creating choiceboards in the target language, you are allowing students to use the target language in order to learn the target language, which can be a powerful tool in overall language retention.

In the video below, Stephen Van Orden shares how providing students with choice in their learning path can have a powerful effect on their motivation to produce language. Specifically, within his learning management system Stephen organized multiple learning activities based on proficiency levels. His students can then choose both their proficiency level and their activity within that level.



[Watch on YouTube](#)

7.2.3 Personalizing Pace

Personalizing pace means allowing students to take more or less time based on their own ways and pace of learning as well as their personal and family life circumstances. It often includes giving students a window of time on due dates for completing activities, assignments, and assessments. Personalizing pace encourages students to manage their time. They know what they need to do and when it needs to be completed, but they also know the other demands on their time (sports, school, play, family and work obligations) and learn to plan for these situations.

By placing learning materials with clear directions and expectations online, teachers allow students to learn at a pace that works best for them. For instance, one student may be able to grasp a concept after watching a video once whereas other students may need to watch it multiple times.

7.2.4 Personalizing Time

In a traditional classroom, students may have a class period to finish an assignment. In a blended classroom this time can be expanded to include time outside the class. Because activities can be accessible outside of the classroom, students can choose times that work well for them. For example, a student may have a difficult time learning in the morning, when he has class. But because he can access his assignment later in the day, he is able to complete it and do a good job. Time is closely related to pace. Because students are not bound to a specific time to do an assignment, they can increase or decrease their pace according to their own preferences, needs, and abilities.

Additionally, remember that research in world language acquisition has for decades indicated that students should be studying their new language for at least 30 minutes a day. In a traditional classroom setting, students work with the world language teacher for a set amount of class time and then are expected to complete an additional 30 minutes at home, with what is often textbook-based written homework that is associated with the lesson taught in class. In a blended setting, students can personalize their progress. What they are work on at home can be a more organic

extension of their classroom learning, allowing them to focus more on weaker world language concepts and work more closely on goals they have set.

7.2.5 Personalizing Place

Personalizing place revisits traditional practices about place. Because blended courses often include online instruction, students can choose to do activities at home or at school. In addition, they can access instruction when they have to miss activities because of illness, travel, or extra-curricular activities. However, another aspect of place is the configuration of the classroom. Classrooms are often viewed as rows of desks or sometimes desks grouped into tables. But classrooms don't have to look this way. They can be made more comfortable, inviting, and conducive to the kinds of activities that take place in a blended classroom.

Also, world language instruction is as much about culture as it is about language. By allowing more flexibility in place, students can experience the language outside of the classroom, thereby creating and allowing a more authentic language experience.

In the following video Stephanie Pryce shares how she uses technology to allow students to personalize their learning.

Using Technology to Personalize Learning—Stephanie Pryce (3:06)



[Watch on YouTube](#)



7.3 Personalizing Activities and Assessments

Approaching personalization through the five dimensions is one way of planning to personalize. Another way is to look directly at what you do in your classroom. Typically teachers plan assessments and activities around learning objectives to make sure they cover the material they are mandated to cover. Finding ways for students to exercise choice in some or all aspects of these activities and assessments is another way to foster personalization in your classroom.

7.3.1 Personalized Assessments

What do assessments look like in your classroom: an essay exam? A final paper? Short answer questions about a text? A presentation? Do all your students do the same thing?

Personalizing assessments means giving students choices in the ways they demonstrate mastery of a learning outcome. Often this means creating a list of ideas that students can choose from, while also allowing them to suggest their own ideas.

It can be hard for students and teachers to participate in this level of personalization, but the rewards are clear. Magister McGraw remembers in the video below his students' initial reactions to personalized assessment, but discusses the amazing outcomes of this change in his instruction.

Personalized Learning–Daniel McGraw (2:06)



[Watch on YouTube](#)

"I can do what?"

Spanish teacher Señora Bradby-Viquez also ensures that student choice is a part of her assessment practice. Listen to how she thinks about personalization in her blended classroom.

What Do My Students Like?—Cheri Bradby-Viquez (1:08)



[Watch on YouTube](#)

"Don't be afraid. You Would be amazed how easy it is."

As you consider what you have seen, ask yourself the following questions:

- How were these assessments personalized?
- How are these assessments different from traditional assessments?
- What kinds of growth do these assessments encourage in the students?

How might you incorporate these personalization practices into your own blended learning classroom? Tables 1 and 2 below offer a few general ideas to serve as starting points for personalizing learning.

Table 1

Personalized Assessments

Personalized Assessments

Students choose the media they use for the assessment: powerpoint, google docs, video, podcasting, etc.

Students choose the form of the assessment: mindmap, essay, documentary, brochure, story, art, performance, exam, etc.

Students choose the topic of the assessment from a pool of topics. For example, a semester project might allow students to select from one of five or six possible topics that align with cultures or vocabulary studied.

Students choose to do the assessment in groups or on their own.



Blended Teaching Workbook

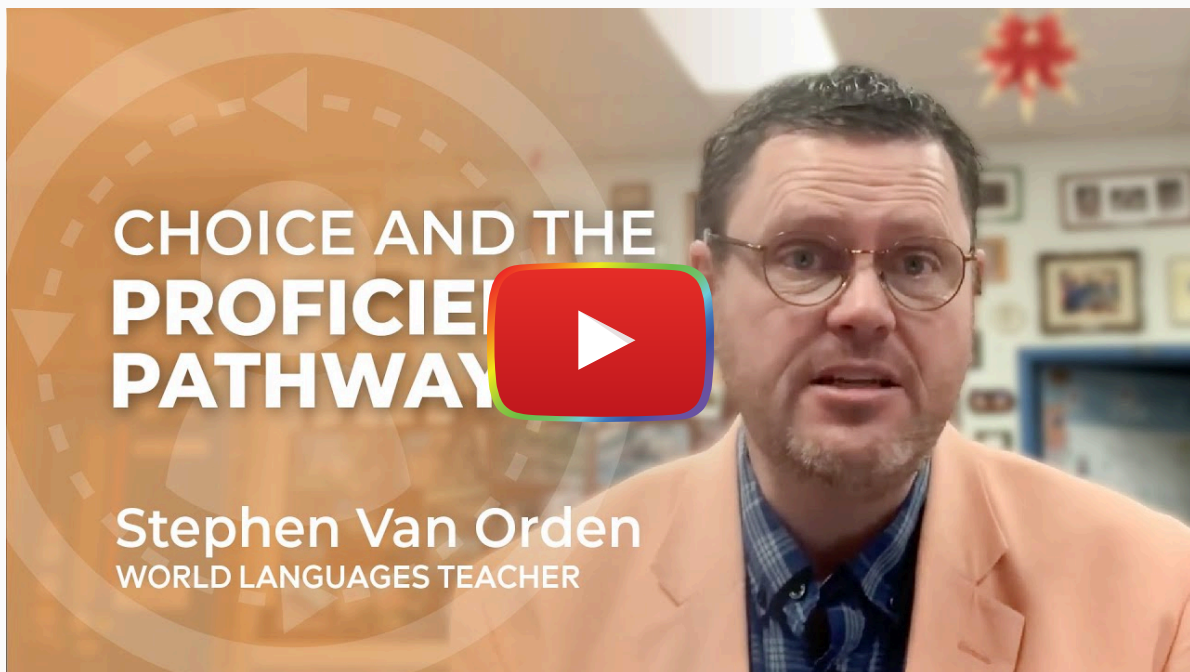
Personalized activities are based on data and goals. Students can choose activities that help them accomplish their goals from playlists and/or choice boards that give them choice in path, pace, time, and place. They may include online interaction as well as online integration of activities that are personalized or differentiated for individual students.

7.3.1 Personalized Activities

Personalized activities are based on data and goals. Students can choose activities that help them accomplish their goals from playlists and/or choice boards that give them choice in path, pace, time, and place. They may include online interaction as well as online integration of activities that are personalized or differentiated for individual students.

German teacher Herr Van Orden discusses how the personalization of activities allows students to align their learning with the [ACFTL Proficiency Pathways](#).

Choice and the Proficiency Pathway–Stephen Van Orden (3:53)



[Watch on YouTube](#)

As you consider his techniques, explore the table below, that offers additional suggestions for personalization of blended learning.

Table 2

Personalized Activities

Personalized Activities

Create a choice board of activities for exploring themes covered over the course of a unit or an academic year.

Personalized Activities

Introduce comparing and contrasting activities by providing links to several different authentic cultural experiences, such as art, poetry, music, cuisine and native peoples. Students choose two and fill out a compare/contrast chart, which can then lead to discussions of similarities and differences between various cultural groups, or, between students' home culture and the culture of the target language.

Have students choose an important figure from the country (or from one of the countries) where the target language is spoken and complete research on the person and their impact on the culture. Share the information (write-up, video, etc.) in a discussion board and have the other students guess who the figure is and give evidence for why they think it is the figure they chose.

Have students practice grammar and sentence constructions by developing various "what if" scenarios and using them as starting points for discussion that could occur on or offline. These scenarios can be things like "If I was trapped on a deserted island" or "If I won the lottery" or other hypothetical situations that allow for a number of grammar and vocabulary topics to be covered while engaging students in authentic conversation.



Blended Teaching Workbook

pencil icon) Blended Teaching Workbook In your Blended Teaching Notebook create a few ideas of personalized *activities* that students can choose from in order to show mastery of the content area you chose earlier.

If you haven't already opened and saved your workbook, you can access it [here](#).

Personalization is a powerful pedagogical tool. It allows students to grow where they need to grow and in a way that is meaningful to them. It combines all the other competencies of blended learning: online integration, online interaction, and data practices to create a unique learning experience for each student. Throughout these chapters you have learned how to use these competencies in a language arts context. Now it is up to you! You are ready for that first small step!

Previous Citation(s)

Graham, C. R., Borup, J., Jensen, M. A., Arnesen, K. T., & Short, C. R. (2021). *K-12 Blended Teaching (Vol 2): A Guide to Practice Within the Disciplines*, 2. EdTech Books. <https://edtechbooks.org/-QNCX>



This content is provided to you freely by EdTech Books.

Access it online or download it at

https://edtechbooks.org/k12blended_world_languages/ela_persCvuHeX.