



Survey Results: Challenges and Advice from Experienced Online Language Teachers

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Eight Core Competency Areas

- LMS skills
- Other technical skills
- Orienting students
- Managing assessment
- Social processes and presence
- Instructional design basics
- Pedagogy (Learning theory)

- Maryland Online

Previous Research

Going Virtual! 2010

The Status of Professional Development and Unique Needs of K-12 Online Teachers

November, 2010

Lisa Dawley, Ph. D.

Kerry Rice, Ed. D.

Glori Hinck, M.S.

BOISE STATE
UNIVERSITY



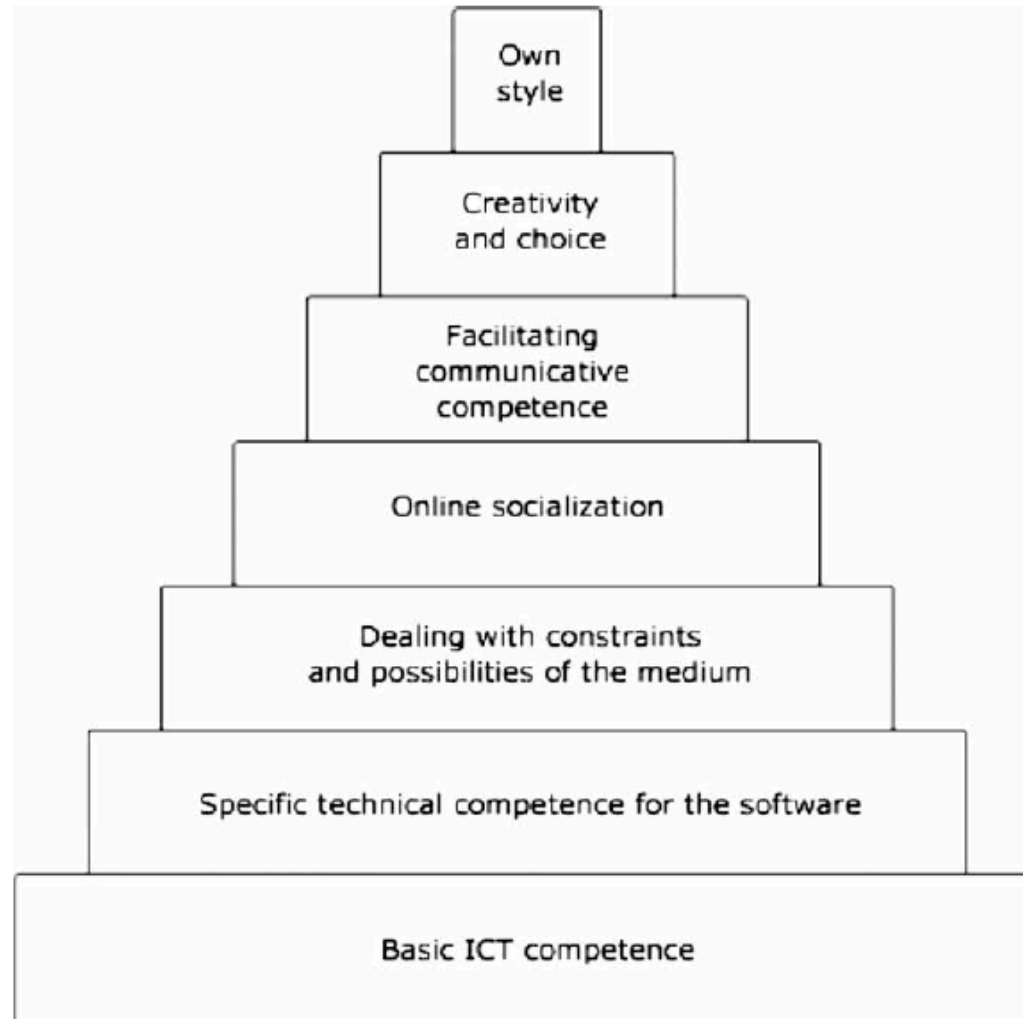


Figure 1. Pyramid of skills (Hampel and Stickler 2005, 317; see also Stickler and Hampel 2007).

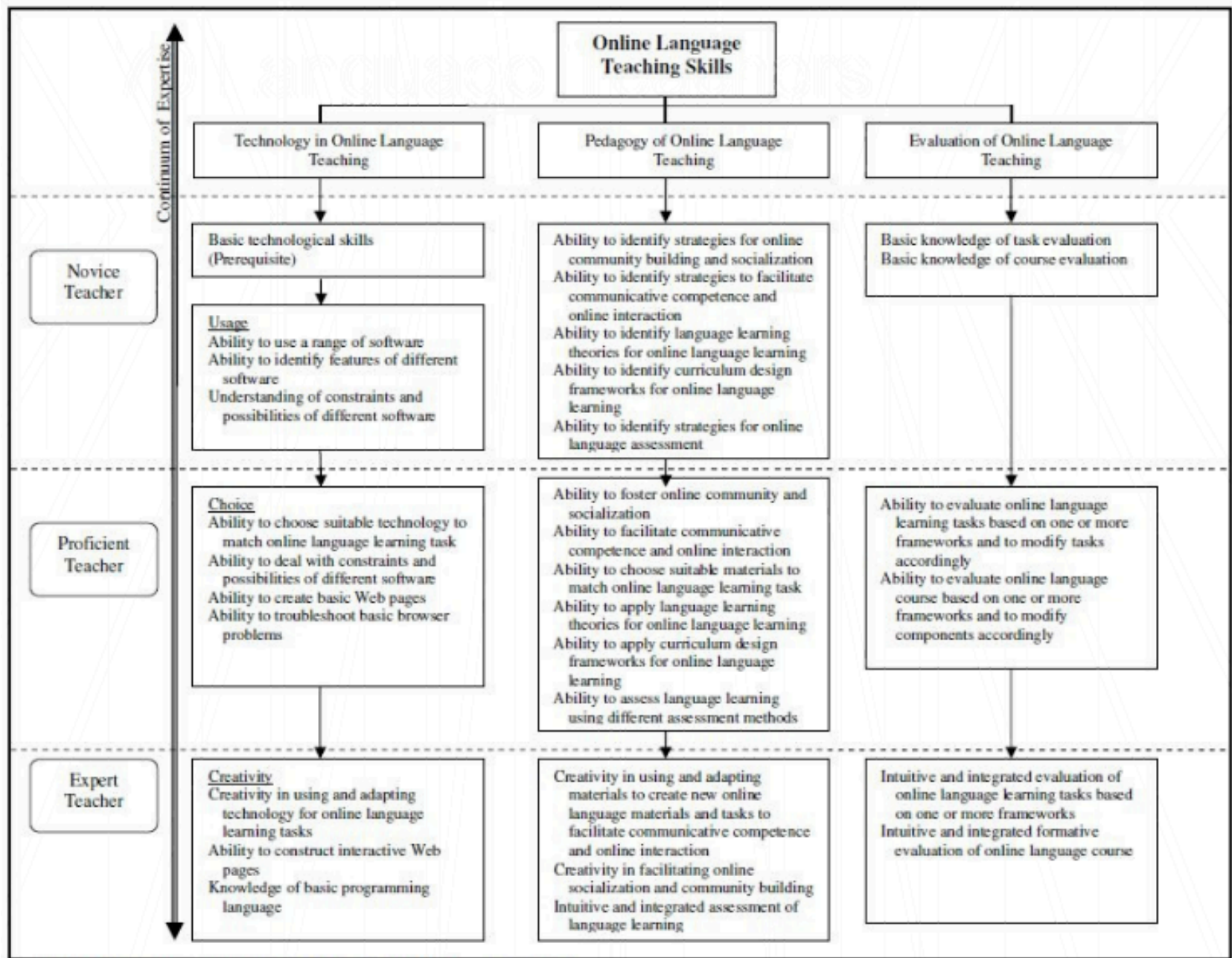
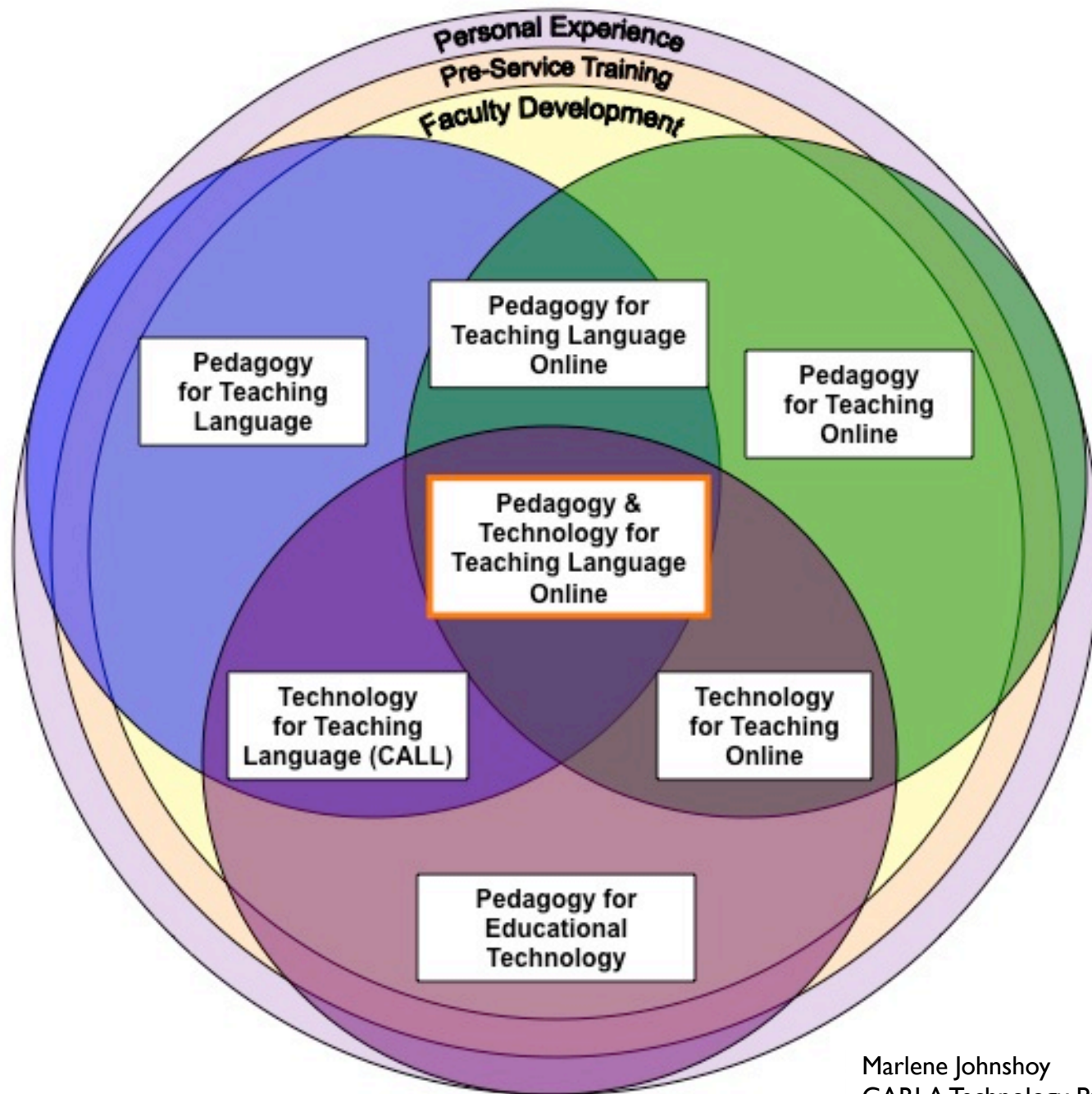


Figure 2 Proposed Framework for Online Language Teaching Skills

Compton (2009)





Teaching Languages Online Survey

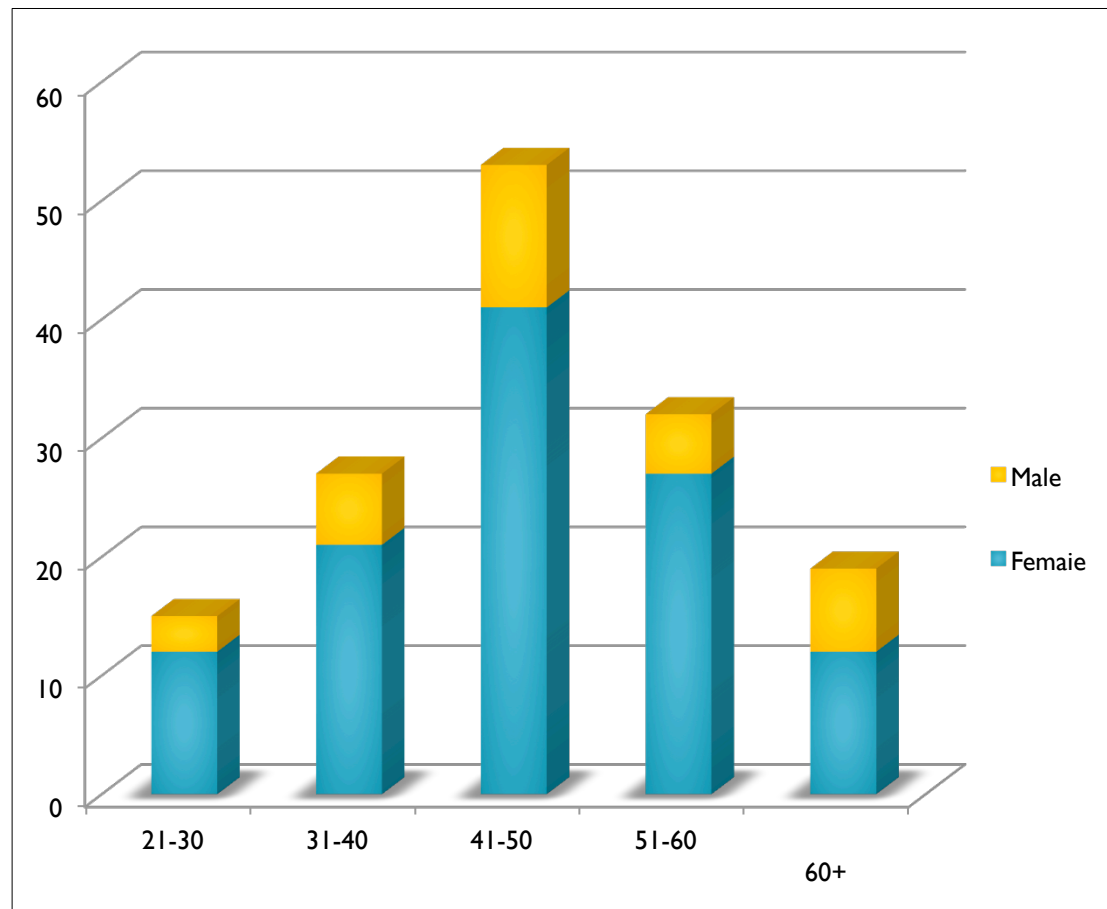
- Survey of experienced online language teachers
- Spring, 2012

Participation posted to or found from:

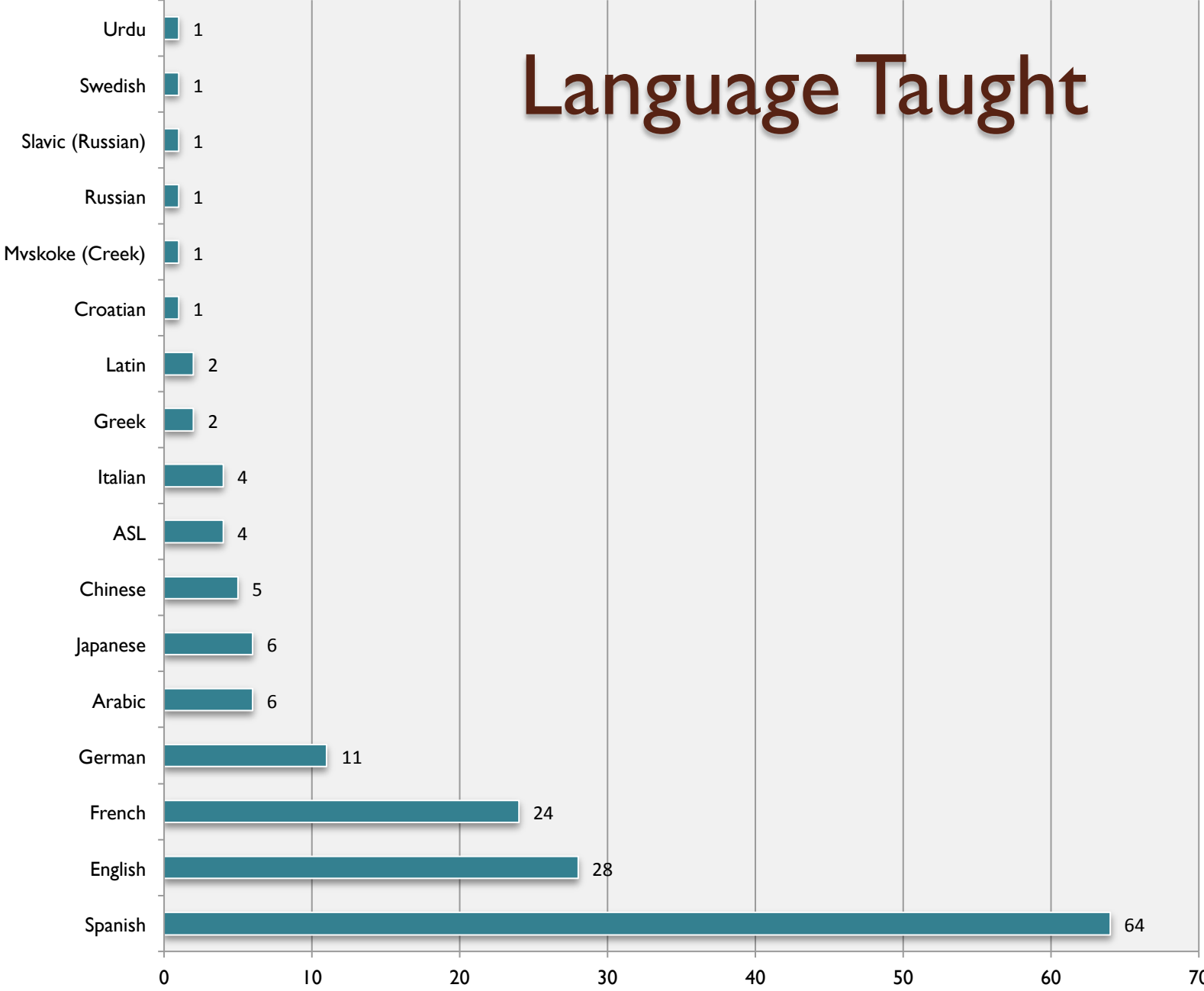
- LLTI, CALICO listservs
- iNACOL, ISTE, ACTFL DL SIG
- Emails gathered from online
- Advertised via CARLA newsletters

Descriptive Stats

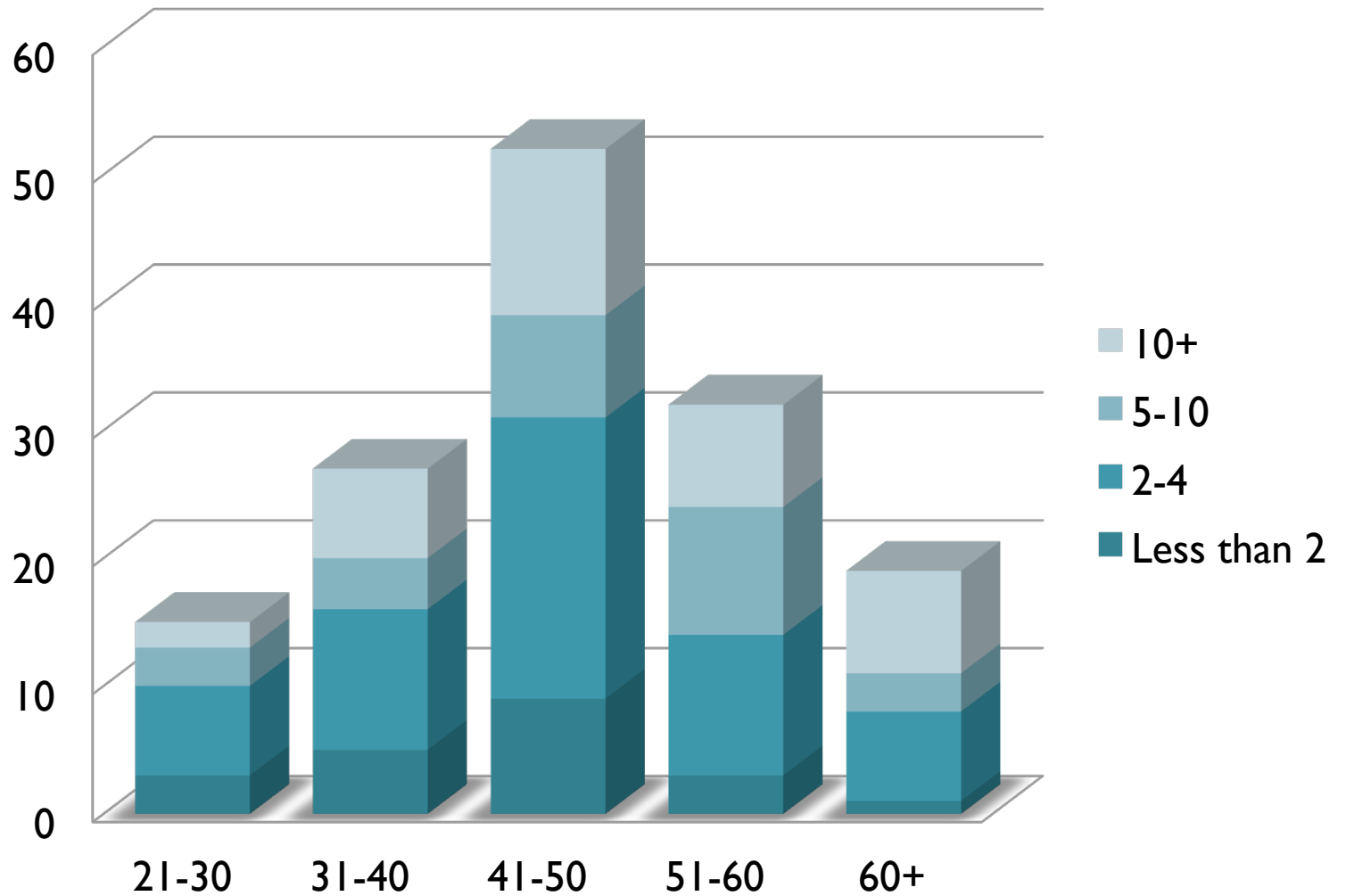
- 147 respondents



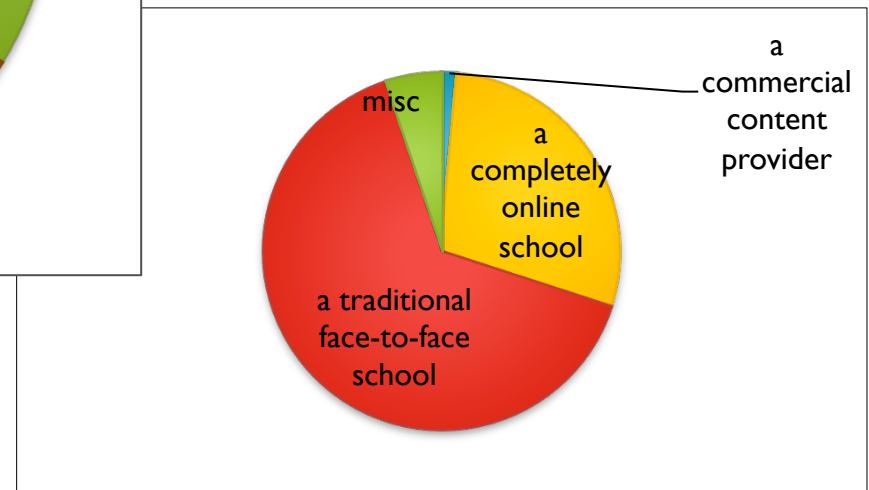
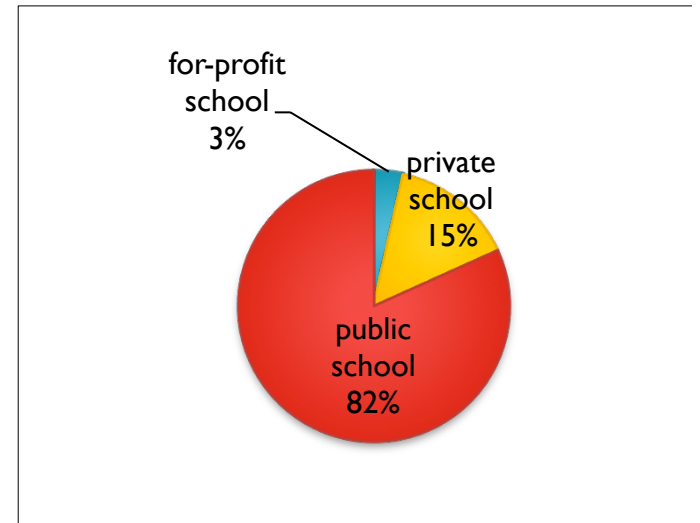
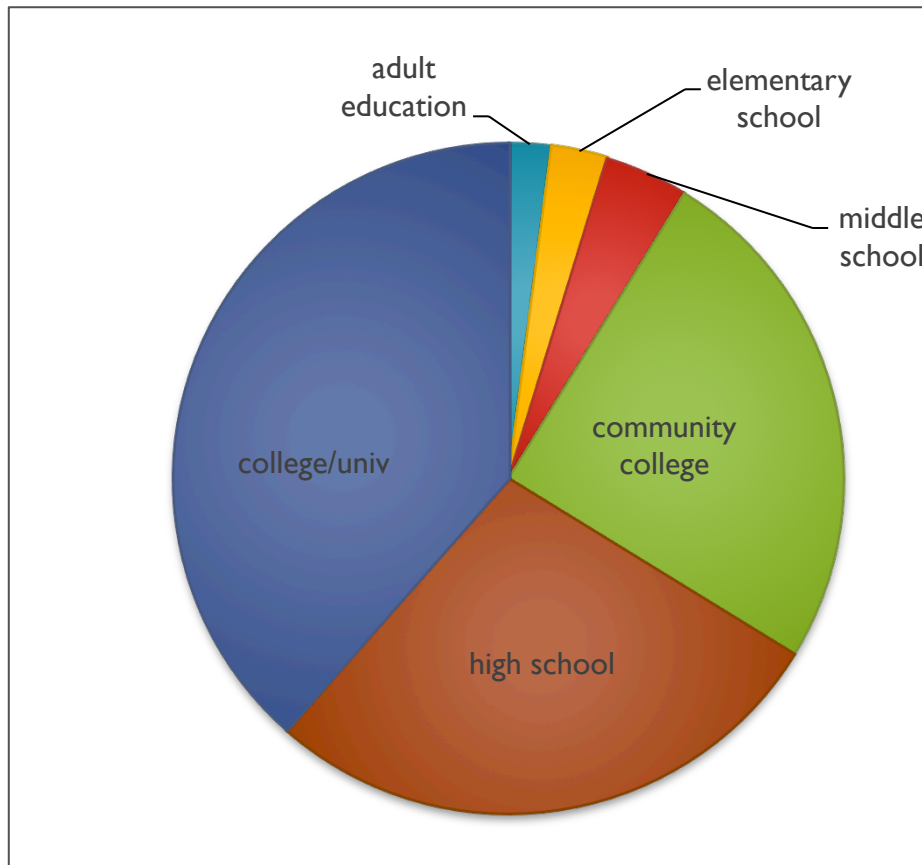
Language Taught



Online Courses Taught by Age Group

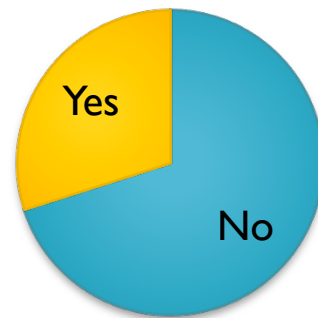


Institution Types and Levels

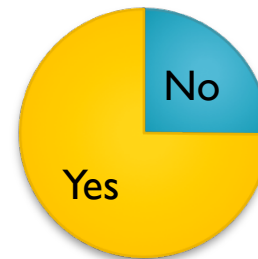


Taken an online course?

Have you ever taken a language online as a student?

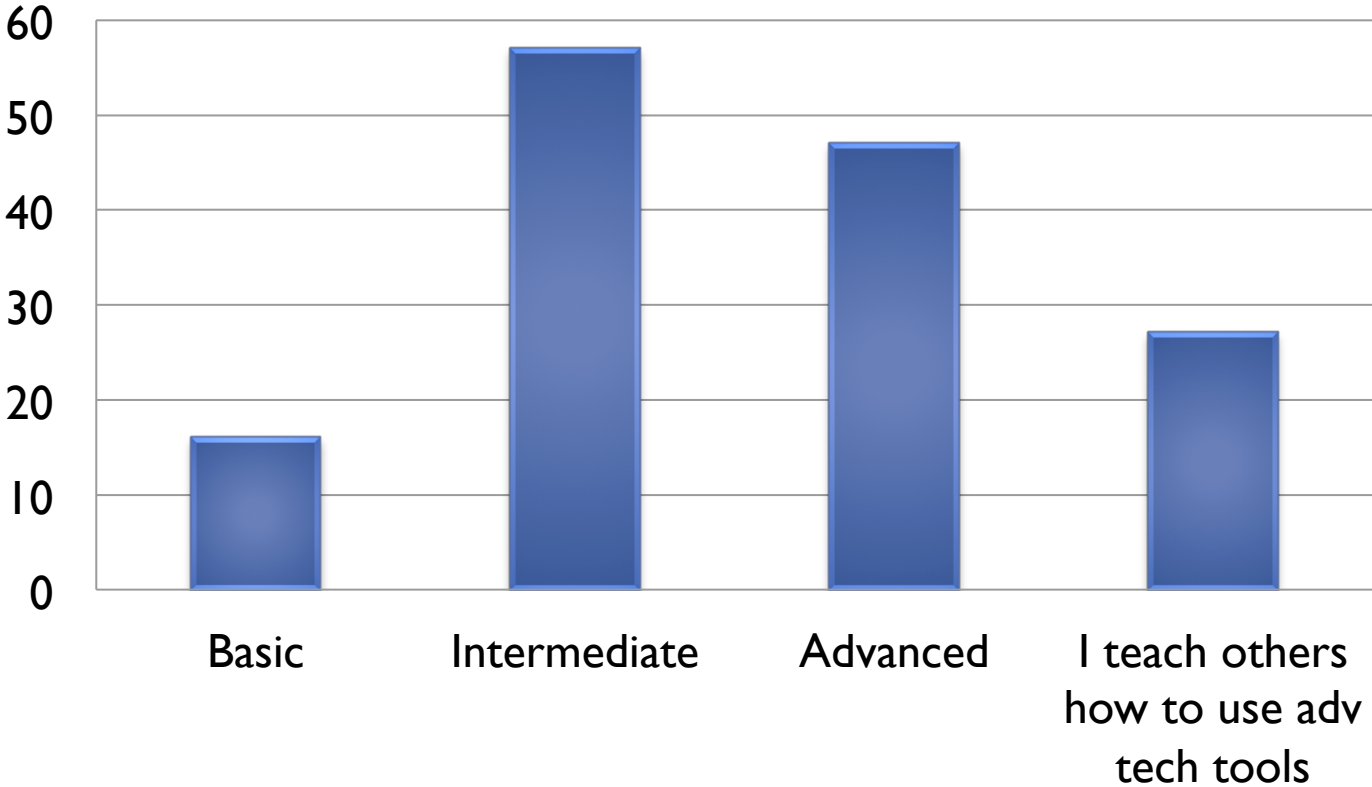


Do you have experience as an online learner in any other content area?



Tech Skills?

How would you rate your tech skills?

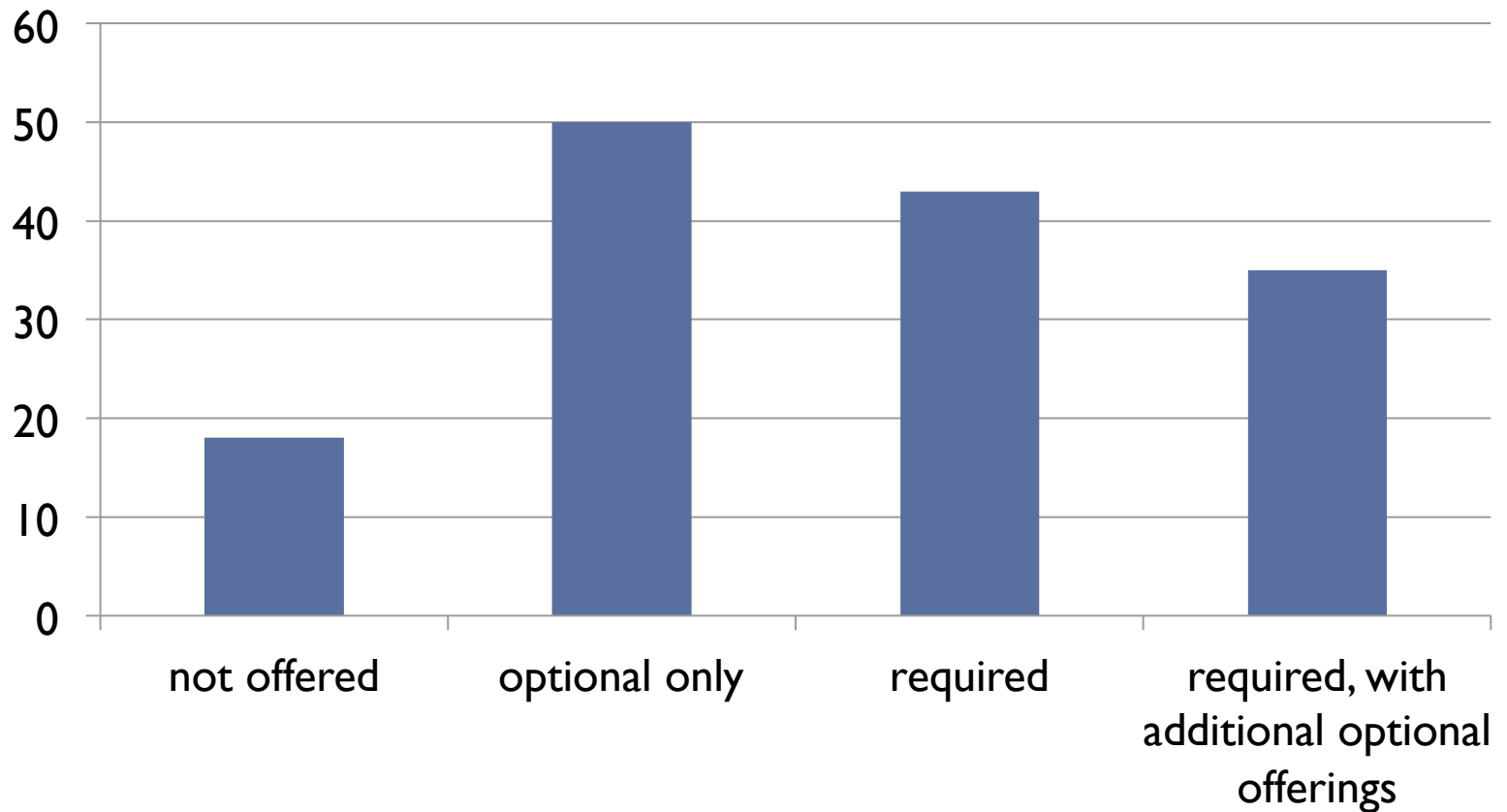




Completed qualification (degree or certificate) to teach online

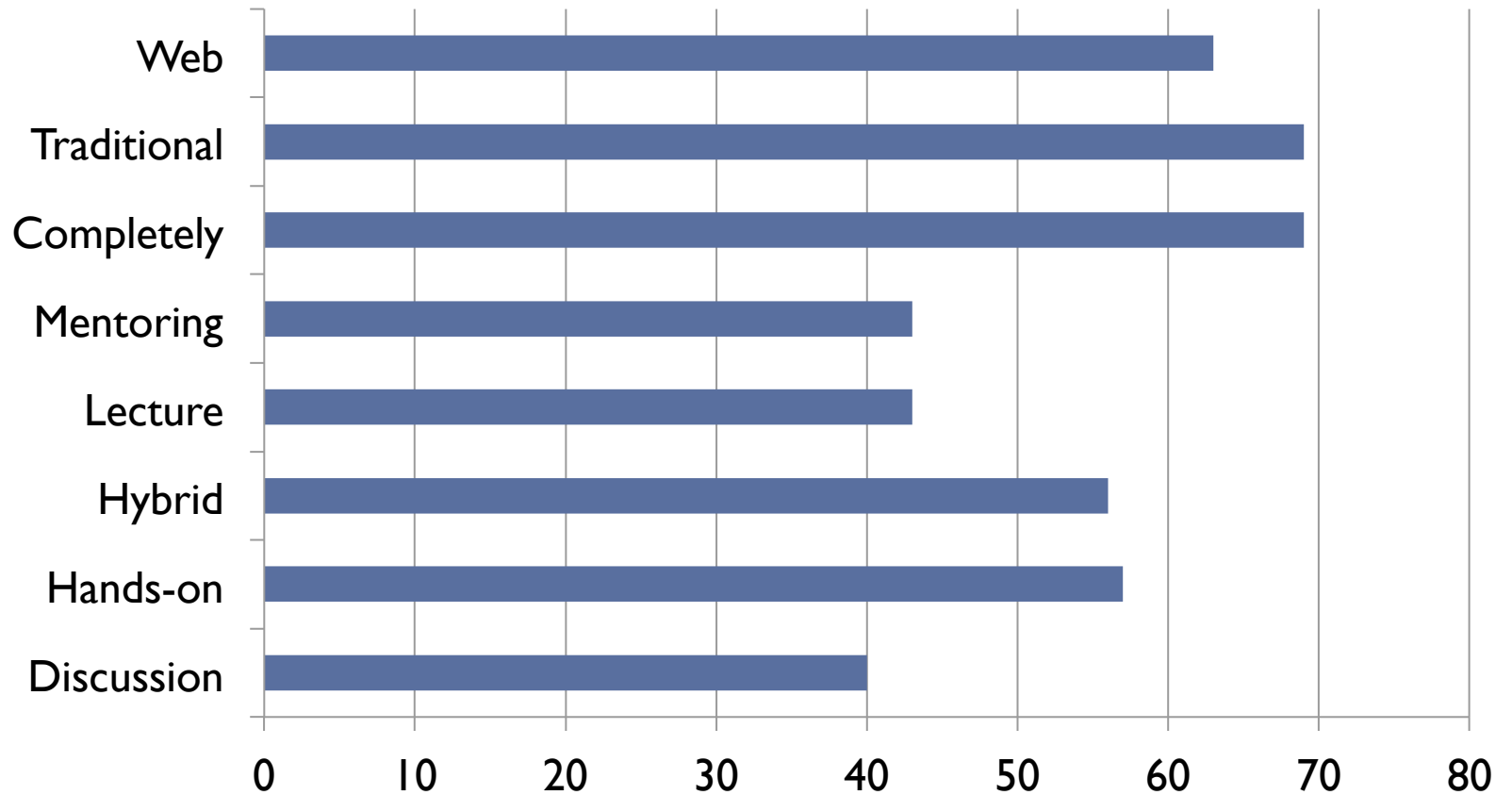
- ID or ED Tech degrees/certificates
- CALL for many years
- LERN certificate
- **TESOL Teaching Online certificate**
- @ONE, Online Teaching Certification
- U of Montana online teaching certification
- LMS certifications (Angel, BB, D2L)
- MiraCosta College Online Teaching Cert
- U of WI – teaching online certificate
- Northwestern College, St Paul MN
- **LearnNC**, NVCC, COLT, WKCTC

Professional Development Offered



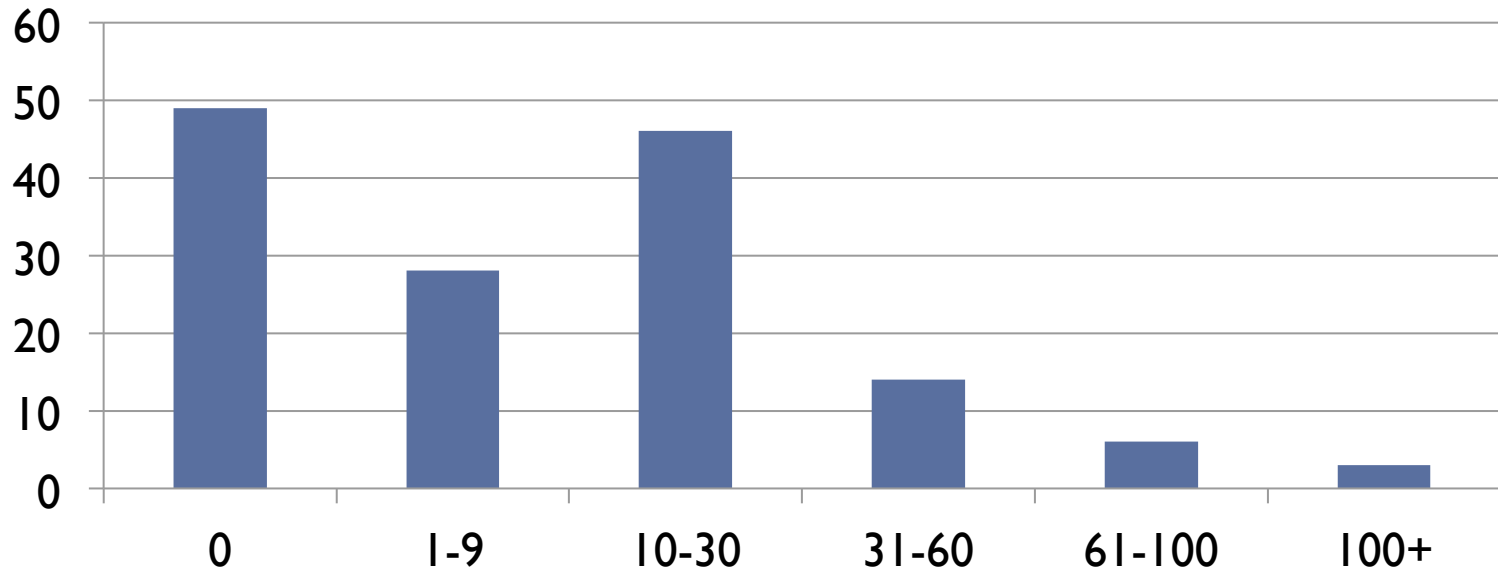
Professional Development Offered

PD offered where you teach was in what formats?



Professional Development Offered

Required Hours of PD *Before* Teaching Online



Required Hours of PD *After* Starting to Teach Online

37 reported ongoing PD

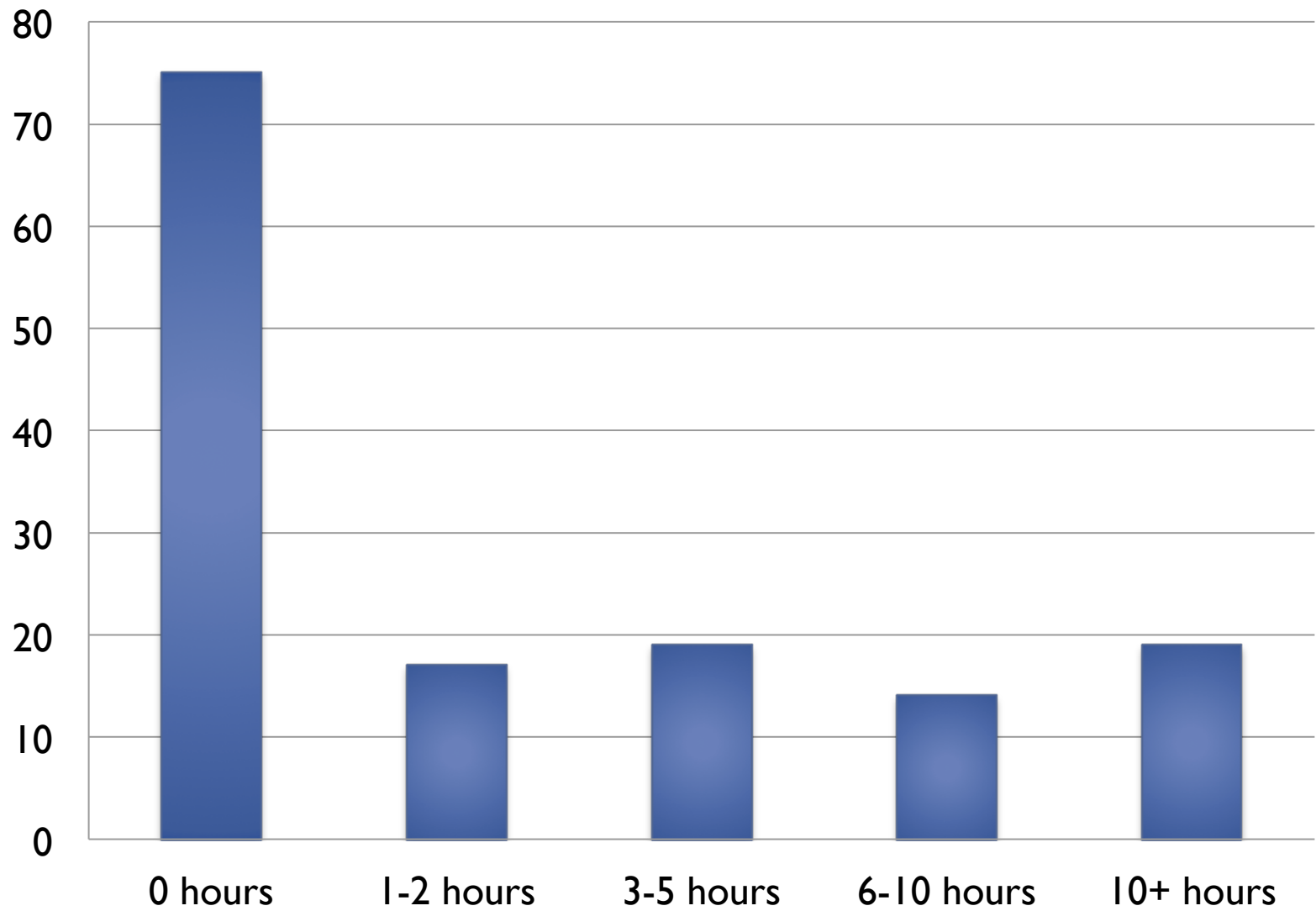
- weekly content group meetings
- publisher updates
- meetings of some sort



Other PD Resources Used

- publisher trainings
- participating in online communities of practice and social media
- online webinars
- checking with my PLN mentor
- monthly online teacher's group
- visiting colleague's course
- MA in Instructional Design
- continued access to faculty online teaching center

Language-specific PD





Language-specific PD content

- Setting up group work in break-out rooms
- Recording sessions to assess speaking
- Webinars with FL content
- Communication options
- ALTEC workshops (CU Boulder)
- Second Life, VoiceThread
- Linguafolio, eLinguaFolio
- Course – “Teaching Languages Online”
- TESOL online teaching certificate courses




Open-ended Questions: Sample responses



What was most helpful to you (to learn to teach online)?

- Colleagues and mentors
- Tools like the CLEAR – RIA
- Being TESOL EVO moderator
- CALICO, IALLT, LL&T Journals
- NERALLT conferences, other CALL resources
- Twitter people
- Seeing previous courses
- Taking an online course – student view
- Taking an online course – how NOT to do things
- Textbook publisher materials & tutorials
- Doing it, experimentation, trial & error
- Interviews, feedback from students
- Assistance of instructional designer, courses in ID
- Certificate, course in online teaching



Comparison between F2F and OL courses, if both taught: General, All Skills

- Depends on caliber of students
- Online Ss either excel or bomb, where Traditional Ss all just do OK.
- Online student works harder to achieve the same as traditional Ss
- OL Ss tend to be special needs – less achievement before even starting OL
- OL Ss are mostly PSEO, more motivated



Comparison F2F/OL: Oral Proficiency

- OL Ss reaching higher levels
- Speaking skills are weaker online
- We don't have an oral component
- Depends on how disciplined the OL Ss are – F2F it's easier to be lazy
- OL have better pronunciation because of recordings and feedback
- Some OL Ss never do the oral tasks
- Depends on the methodology, both OL and in class



Goals & Expectations: OL vs F2F

- OL – oral more weight than written
- At risk Ss just want a pass
- At first my expectations for OL were lower, now I know they can reach the same goals
- OL Ss have flexible due dates, retakes
- OL – time management skills, tech skills, more disciplined, self-motivated
- OL – expect more oral work



Changes or Adaptations for OL

- More detailed instructions, more feedback
- Everything ready before you start
- Weigh oral prof more than written work
- More media integration
- OL is more task-based, grade=portfolios
- OL tech more suited for proficiency curriculum
- More time creating authentic language experiences for Ss
- Completely changed – no textbook, rather video, animation, sound files, and “info sheets”
- More short video tutorial, more Ss collaboration
- Added videos, music, etc. to invigorate the learning (less arid)



Changes or Adaptations for OL

- More self-checking materials
- Follow predictable routines
- I'm more available online
- Cultural activities, guest speakers
- Developed writing tips
- More monitoring, more feedback
- Predicting Ss needs
- More voice recording, partner activities
- Putting the content into stories
- More teacher presence, more interaction
- More personal interaction with Ss

- *Access to technology is a given in OL classes*



“Washback” to F2F courses

- “Teaching online has helped me be a lot more organized in my face to face courses”
- “I have become more aware of different methods of instruction delivery, and I have transferred that delivery to my F2F classroom”



Top Challenges for FL OL Classes

Participants were asked what their “top 3 challenges” were in their online courses.

Based on their open-ended answers from the survey and our own experiences online, here are some topics to consider for teaching an online course...

- Online course development/delivery
- Course management, student motivation
- Oral proficiency skills
- Creating a sense of community
- Assessment and giving feedback
- Time management for teachers & students
- Teacher & student preparation for online
- Technology
- Administrative issues

Thank you to Frances Matos-Schultz for help with this section



Challenge: Online Course Development

- Delivery method: video conferencing-based courses (synchronous) vs internet-based courses (async)
- Online lesson plan - what's different online?
- What sort of review does the course get before approval/purchase?
- What LMS do you use? school-provided or third party?
- Browser difficulties with your chosen LMS or apps?
- Who is responsible for course development?
 - does the teacher do it all? is it hired out? work in a team? purchase it from a third party?



Challenge: Course Management

- Keeping students on task, engaged, motivated?
- How do you get students to do the work?
- Detailed instructions
- How an online syllabus differs from a f2f syllabus
- Creating a consistent course design (activities due on the same days per module/week)



Challenge: Oral Proficiency Skills

- How do you get students to talk to each other?
- Small group management and keep them on task
- How do you get students enough practice?
- How do you do oral assessments (tech/ apps, procedures)



Challenge: Creating a Sense of Community (when you can't see them)

- How do you connect with your students?
- How do you get your students to connect with each other?
- How do you get students to support each other?
- How do you created your “teaching presence” online?
- How do you connect with other colleagues for support and sharing?



Challenge: Assessment/Feedback

- How do you give exams? (proctored, face-to-face, etc.)
- How do you know who is taking the exam?
- How do you test oral proficiency skills?
- How much/how often do you give feedback to student work (any skill)?
- How do students ask questions and get answers?



Challenge: Time Management for Teachers and Students

- How do you keep your online class from taking over your life?
- How do you get students to understand that they need to keep up, meet deadlines?
- What guidelines do you set up for individualized contact with learners?
- How to teach students time management and boundaries?



Challenge: Teacher Preparation to Teach Online

- What preparation did you receive before teaching an online class?
- What kinds of preparation are necessary to teach online? different from regular teacher ed?
- What kinds of ongoing support do online teachers need?
- What is different about the preparation that **language** teachers need to teach online?
- Do you think that online teachers should be certified some way? a license?



Challenge: Technology

- What are the biggest tech problems that you have run into (or can imagine)?
- What are the biggest tech problems that you have run into (or can imagine)?
- How much tech should online teachers be required to know?
- Should class teachers be required to do tech support in addition to teaching? or the school?
- What kind of “readiness” training do/should students receive?
- What kind of tech support is there for the teacher?
- What apps do you use that have been particularly successful? (for what?)
- Troubleshooting from a distance



Challenge: Administrative

- How much should online teachers be compensated in comparison with F2F teachers?
- How many classes/number of students should an online teacher have (compared to F2F)?
- Who is credited with the courses? does the teacher keep control of the content?
- Perceptions of administrators regarding online courses



Key Advice for Newbies

Survey participants were also asked what 3 things they would tell a teacher new to teaching online (newbie). Here are the topic categories with sample responses on the next slides:

- Personal characteristics
- Time required
- Preparation to teach online
- Course development
- Student characteristics & preparation
- Tech support
- Course management
- Communication & community
- Course activities
- Tech tools



Advice: Teacher Personal Characteristics Needed

- Patient, flexible
- Organized, very organized
- Open, curious, inventive
- Like to explore, experiment
- Punctual, accessible
- Ready to work hard
- Experienced classroom teacher – or not

- “If you don’t believe in it, don’t do it.”



Advice: Time Required

- “Expect to spend a lot more time working online than you do face to face”
- “ ... and filling out more contact logs than you ever thought possible.”
- Don’t do it if you can’t bear hours and hours in front of a computer
- Know that to do it right will take a lot more time
- Be sure to take a break at least every hour

- “Relax. Don’t try to do it all.” Tell the kids that you have a life – they seem to forget that.



Advice: Teacher Preparation

- Become an avid online learner first!
- Do whatever it takes to get training
 - Earn a certificate
 - Read the research
 - Study online methodology – it's different
- Observe/shadow a colleague's course
- Work with a mentor
- Try doing online activities with a F2F first



Advice: Course Development

- Learn instructional design & follow it
- Use backwards design – focus on outcomes
- Start way in advance – it takes a long time
- Understand that the pace online is slower
- Design with a consistent and repetitive pattern
- Syllabus & directions need to be *extremely* clear and detailed
- Have everything done before class starts
- Don't be afraid to ask for help from e-learning department
- Use a publisher site – don't use a publisher site
- Know curriculum well before adding or tweaking
- Practice, practice, practice – test with a colleague
- Take your own course – know what it looks like from the students' view



Advice: Find Good Tech Support

- Be sure to have reliable tech support
- Use tech support (technical & pedagogical)
- Be sure the students have good support for the LMS and the text/publisher site
- The instructor should not have to be involved with student technical issues
- Use student technical knowledge to help you – they love to share what they know!



Advice: Online Student Characteristics & Preparation

- Know your learners – digital literacy level, they have less time, they need to fulfill a requirement (not learn a language)
- Use a pre-course questionnaire to tell students if online is right for them
- Make a contract for Ss to sign that details everything to do and time to do it (3x more)
- Make sure they know how much time it takes
- Prepare time management tips in the syllabus
- Organize a session to test and setup tech or a scavenger hunt to find their way around
- Online is anytime convenience – synchronous sessions need to be planned for ahead



Advice: Course Management

Online teaching is not “set it, and leave it” – “if a course is properly designed, your role is that of a guide, a consultant, a supporter of individualized learning”

- Establish sensible caps, like 15-20 students
- Encourage student efforts to speak
- Demand the same as from traditional Ss
- Monitor, monitor, monitor - constantly with dedication
- Ss need you to give - and enforce - deadlines and rules
- Give quality feedback promptly, regularly
- Never, ever react on the spot for a controversial issue – let it rest overnight
- Ask students for feedback – weekly, end-of-course – see if things meet their needs, what you can change
- Take everything into consideration – and have a Plan B, and C, and D



Advice: Course Activities

“Online teaching lends itself to teacher-centered presentation modes, which are never the best for students learning languages.”

- “The only limits to what can be taught in an online classroom are the limits set by the teacher.”
- Offer several ways for students learn
- Design a lot of resources for practice
- Utilize the wealth of authentic resources on the web (videos, culture info, virtual field trips, etc.)
- Find ways to bolster oral proficiency
 - Request at least one synchronous oral evaluation
 - Get students talking to each other – there are a lot of online tools to facilitate this
- “Let students shine” – let them help with leading discussions, posting summaries, etc.
- “I love the challenge of making the two experiences [OL & F2F] comparable!”



Advice: Technology Tools

Language teachers should exploit the tools available, but first acquire “know-what” (what tools to use), “know-how” (how to use them), and “know-why” (why to use them).

- Learn a variety of tech tools as it really does help to engage students
- Learn your tools inside and out – you can’t use it if you don’t understand it
- Look for chances to increase skills
- Start small – don’t use every new tool at once, avoid bandwagon, test before using with students
- Use a variety of online tools to better differentiate
- Make students use a webcam from the start
- Make movies, create games, use discussion boards, Quizlet, BBC TV, Discover Education, LiveMocha, Quia, Skype, Google docs, Facebook groups




Advice: Communication & Community

“Electronic communication style is most important: many instructors try to ‘lecture’ when communicating with students in too formal a style. They are unaware of the importance of communicating ‘I hear you’ before launching into advice or – heaven forbid – pure criticism ... on paper assignments.”

- Connect with students early and create a sense of community among learners
- Find as many ways as possible to connect
- Try to have a personal relationship with each student
- Emails really need to be answered within hours rather than days
- Be present in the course so students know you are real and care
- Communicate clearly, be human but be careful with things like humor
- Find out what motivates students – share your life experiences with them
- Build community, foster relationships, be responsive to them

“Online teaching is way more time consuming than teaching F2F because that communication takes a lot of time. Chat with them, call them, have discussions with them, make them aware of assignments, grades, and missing homework.”



Do it, learn from your mistakes, enjoy your successes, and understand that if it were not for online learning, some students would not be able to study at all.



Resources for Teaching Online

CARLA Project – Teaching Languages Online

- Online Bibliography online
<http://www.carla.umn.edu/technology/tlo>
- Online CARLA summer institutes
 - Using web tools
 - Transitioning to Teaching Online
- STARTALK:TTLO program

See also:

- IALLT – Int’l Assoc for Language Learning and Technology
- CALICO – Computer-Assisted Language Instruction Consortium
- ACTFL Distance Learning SIG

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