Affordable Learning Georgia Textbook Transformation Grants

Final Report

To submit your Final Report, go to the Final Report submission page on the ALG website:
http://affordablelearninggeorgia.org/site/final_report_submission

Final report submission requires four files:

- *This completed narrative document*
- *Syllabus or syllabi*
  - *(if multiple files, compress into one .zip folder)*
- *Qualitative/Quantitative Measures data files*
  - *(if multiple files, compress into one .zip folder)*
- *Photo of your team or a class of your students w/ at least one team member, minimum resolution 800x600px*
  - *(nearly all smartphones take photos larger than this size by default)*

Follow the instructions on the webpage for uploading your documents. Based on receipt of this report, ALG will process the final payment for your grant. ALG will follow up in the future with post-project grantee surveys and may also request your participation in a publication, presentation, or other event.

General Information

Date: 12/16/2019

Grant Round: 12

Grant Number: 396

Institution Name(s): Kennesaw State University

Project Lead: Andrea Scapolo

Team Members (Name, Title, Department, Institutions if different, and email address for each):

Renata Creekmur, Lecturer of Italian, Department of Foreign Languages, rcreekmu@kennesaw.edu;

Federica Santini, Professor of Italian and Interdisciplinary Studies, Department of Foreign Languages and Interdisciplinary Studies Department, fsantini@kennesaw.edu;

Andrea Scapolo, Assistant Professor of Italian, Department of Foreign Languages, ascapolo@kennesaw.edu.

Course Name(s) and Course Numbers: ITAL 1001, ITAL 1002

Semester Project Began: Fall 2018

Final Semester of Implementation: Fall 2019

Total Number of Students Affected During Project: 331

1. Narrative

A. Describe the key outcomes, whether positive, negative, or interesting, of your project. Include:
- Summary of your transformation experience, including challenges and accomplishments
- Transformative impacts on your instruction
- Transformative impacts on your students and their performance

The goal of this project was to create open-access, textbook-less elementary Italian courses (ITAL 1001 and 1002) that foster students' engagement through the use of current and relevant authentic materials, and activities that help them build skills they will need in their academic and professional careers. Italian 1001 and 1002 are foundational courses for our program, and Italian 1002 is part of the KSU General Education curriculum. In these two courses, students acquire effective communication skills in both the written and spoken language and an understanding of the practices and products of Italian culture.

Over the course of our project, we completely restructured the existing courses, organizing the content into thematic units that adopt a project-based approach to language acquisition and intercultural awareness, with end-of-semester portfolios that foster students' reflective learning and critical thinking.

The resulting project provides students with an integrated, accessible, high quality, and no-cost platform of authentic online resources. Some of these materials were already publicly available and accessible, while others were created and made available by our team.

By using OER, instructors are able to serve a more diverse population and help under-served students, such as first-generation students, to take full advantage of educational opportunities offered by world languages and culture programs. Since 2018, our University has marked courses as No-cost, Low-cost (required materials at $40 or less), or regular. Thus, OER can have a direct impact on enrollment. In combination with addressing enrollment and becoming more competitive among course offerings, we wanted flexible, accessible, authentic materials that are easily approachable by our students and that foster inclusivity and social justice in our classes.

Additionally, the combination of the new materials used and the project-based approach allowed us to keep the students engaged in class at all times, and increased their participation in all activities.

Specifically, our work was divided into 5 main phases:

1. Set learning goals and objectives for the lower-level curriculum.
2. Identify, evaluate, select, and organize existing OER.
3. Creation of additional OER
4. Implementation of the new learning format
5. Evaluation of the new learning format

1. Although through our grant we received funding to create OER only for the introductory levels (Ital 1001 & Ital 1002), our ultimate goal was to restructure the whole lower-level curriculum. Thus, we started by identifying what students should be able to do at the end of the lower-level (ITAL 2002) and, through backwards design planning, we set goals and objectives for the previous levels. We then identified three thematic units for each of the two introductory levels, and specific objectives for each one of them. We paid particular attention to the selection of the topics, striving to find themes that would be engaging for the students and at the same time culturally relevant. Once we created the framework, we detailed the specifics of each unit, adapting a template provided by ACTFL.

2. The following phase was to identify and evaluate existing OER that would fit our goals. For this purpose, we explored different sites: Merlot, OER Commons, and OPENSTAX. Unfortunately, we found out that existing resources for Italian are limited, and the ones available did only partially meet our needs. We also explored different websites containing a variety of teaching materials for teachers of Italian (from grammar explanations to exercises, to games, to communicative videos) as well as authentic resources that could easily be linked.

3. Once terminated this preliminary phase, we proceeded to the main phase of our project: the creation of an e-book to be used in our 1001 and 1002 sections in place of the current textbook. As we created the materials, we made sure that they would meet the following criteria:

   - be aligned to our goals
   - be organized in a flexible way in order to give instructors support while leaving them the freedom to organize their lessons according to their teaching style;
   - be engaging for the students thanks to the incorporation of multimedia, up-to-date, and culturally relevant content, authentic materials, and engaging self-assessment activities.

   - make use of technology available at KSU, such as Kaltura MediaSpace for the creation of videos and   SoftChalk as a platform to host our content.

4. The new format was implemented for the first time at KSU in the Fall 2019 in four ITAL 1001 sections and two ITAL 1002 sections were involved. Two full-time and one part-time faculty members were involved in the implementation.

5. We assessed the new format through the measures described in Section 3 below.

B. Describe lessons learned, including any things you would do differently next time.

The group meet weekly from January 2019 to November 2019, setting specific goals and adapting them over the months as the project took shape.

Flexibility and new opportunities were two unexpected results of working on this project.

The first part of the project, or exploratory phase, was long and challenging because of the sheer quantity of materials currently available online. We selected about 100 sources. Then, we decided to clarify exactly what we wanted our students to be able to do within the language and to start with the overall design of the project.

While we have been very pleased with the results of this project, we realized that restructuring our lower-level curriculum and creating the related materials was more time-consuming than expected and at times it has been challenging to keep up with our timeline.

2. Quotes
● Provide three quotes from students evaluating their experience with the no-cost learning materials.

1. "We were being taught the structure of the language and the culture at the same time. We used the course material to learn more about Italian in every way and it made learning the grammar much more easy and fun."
2. "The online modules correlated to the out of class and in-class assignments and made accessing the information I needed extremely easy."
3. " The structure of this class was excellent at aiding me towards my goals for learning the Italian language and culture."
4. "I was never confident in my foreign language classes in high school, however in college, I truly am starting to grasp the concept of learning another language. Also, I am enjoying it. Whereas before, I was constantly stressed out when I had to go to my foreign language classes

3. Quantitative and Qualitative Measures
3a. Uniform Measurements Questions
The following are uniform questions asked to all grant teams. Please answer these to the best of your knowledge.

Student Opinion of Materials

Was the overall student opinion about the materials used in the course positive, neutral, or negative?

Total number of students affected in this project: __105__

- Positive: ____91.7___ % of __48___ number of respondents
- Neutral: ___8.3__ % of __48__ number of respondents
- Negative: ___0____ % of ___48___ number of respondents

Student Learning Outcomes and Grades

Was the overall comparative impact on student performance in terms of learning outcomes and grades in the semester(s) of implementation over previous semesters positive, neutral, or negative?

Student outcomes should be described in detail in Section 3b.

Choose One:
- _X_ Positive: Higher performance outcomes measured over previous semester(s)
- ___ Neutral: Same performance outcomes over previous semester(s)
- ___ Negative: Lower performance outcomes over previous semester(s)

Student Drop/Fail/Withdraw (DFW) Rates

Was the overall comparative impact on Drop/Fail/Withdraw (DFW) rates in the semester(s) of implementation over previous semesters positive, neutral, or negative?

Drop/Fail/Withdraw Rate:
Depending on what you and your institution can measure, this may also be known as a drop/failure rate or a withdraw/failure rate.

___14.3____% of students, out of a total _105_ students affected, dropped/failed/withdrew from the course in the final semester of implementation.

Fall 2019: 15 W/WF/F out of 105 = 14.3%

Fall 2018: 17 W/WF/F out of 99 = 17.2%

Choose One:
- _X__ Positive: This is a lower percentage of students with D/F/W than previous semester(s)
- ___ Neutral: This is the same percentage of students with D/F/W than previous semester(s)
- ___ Negative: This is a higher percentage of students with D/F/W than previous semester(s)

3b. Measures Narrative

In this section, summarize the supporting impact data that you are submitting, including all quantitative and qualitative measures of impact on student success and experience. Include all measures as described in your proposal, along with any measures developed after the proposal submission.

[When submitting your final report, as noted above, you will also need to provide the separate file (or .zip with multiple files) of supporting data on the impact of your Textbook Transformation, such as surveys, analyzed data collected, etc.]

- *Include measures such as:*
    - *Drop, fail, withdraw (DFW) delta rates*
    - *Course retention and completion rates*
    - *Average GPA*
    - *Pre-and post-transformation DFW comparison*
    - *Student success in learning objectives*
    - *Surveys, interviews, and other qualitative measures*
- *Indicate any co-factors that might have influenced the outcomes.*

As described in our proposal, the measures of impact on student success and experience that we implemented are the following:

a. DFW delta rates for all impacted courses, and pre- and post- transformation DFW comparison.

Based on DFW data comparison from the last pre-transformation semester (Fall 2018) and the semester of full implementation (Fall 2019), the impact of our project has been notably positive. Out of the 105 students affected by the project in Fall 2019, 15 students received a W/WF/F, amounting to 14.3%. This percentage is significantly lower than Fall 2018 data, during which 17 out of 99 total enrolled students in the same courses (17.2%) received a W/WF/F.

b. Average GPA for all impacted courses.

Fall 2018 (pre-implementation) data:

Out of a total of 99 students enrolled in 1001 and 1002 sections, the grade percentages were as follows:

A = 43.4%

B = 26.2%

C = 9%

D = 1%

F = 8.1%

Fall 2019 (post-implementation) data:

Out of a total of 105 students enrolled in 1001 and 1002 face-to-face and online sections, the grade percentages were as follows:

A = 39%

B = 28.6%

C = 10.5%

D = 4.8%

WF/F = 6.7%

Data show that after the implementation of the new format over 80% of the students passed the class (82.6%), and close to 70% completed the course with an A or a B. This demonstrates that the vast majority of students successfully met the learning objectives for the level.

c. General enrollment trend for the impacted courses.

The general enrollment trend is positive, and we believe that offering OER courses that are free of cost for the students will have a positive impact on future program enrollment. Over the last few years and in line with national trends in foreign language enrollment, we had seen our enrollment at the lower-level decrease; we are confident that the new OER-based courses will reverse this trend, and are happy to have seen the first results already during the first semester of implementation. For example, during the Fall of 2017, total enrollment in ITAL 1001 and 1002 courses was 120 students. Enrollment decreased in Fall 2018, at the time of reception of the grant, with a total of 92 students in our 1001 and 1002 courses. While this is in line with national trends (see MLA report), we were pleased to see enrollment pick up again in Fall 2019, with a total of 105 students enrolled in our 1001 and 1002 courses.

d. Survey of pilot face-to-face sections (3 sections, for a total of 76 students) in Fall 2019. [Quantitative and qualitative].

As shown above (see 3a) and in the included survey link (survey), the response of students in our Fall 2019 pilot face-to-face courses was overwhelmingly positive, with 91.7% of respondents remarking on the positive impact of the project, as it emerges from the quotes included in Section 2 above.

e. University-wide student evaluations for pilot courses. [Quantitative and qualitative].

We have not as yet received Fall 2019 student evaluations, but we are happy to make them available upon request as soon as we receive them. We will continue using student evaluations as a measure for adapting the OER project in the future.

f. Instructor observations.

Our pilot classes have received very positive peer-evaluations. We are including peer evaluations by Mr. Alberto Lucchi, Dr. Karen Graf and Dr. Lillyrose Veneziano Broccia.

Mr. Alberto Lucchi, the part-time instructor involved in the piloting of the materials, wrote in an email directed to us at the end of the semester:

Dear Andrea, Federica, Renata,

I wish to thank you most sincerely for the new course you have designed, which I have just finished teaching, for the first time, to the 1001 class. It has been a very pleasant novelty, and somehow a rejuvenating experience, for me! It seems to me that the themes of the various units and modules are very well selected: they start from situations our students easily can relate to and, from there, move forward to widen their scope to the same situations in the Italian context and culture! The lexicon offered for each module is very relevant, but not overwhelming, as it was, unfortunately, the case with other courses. Each module consists of a variety of readings, videos, exercises and activities, combined with just the right amount of grammar.

No class looked monotonous. On the contrary the students were, and felt, mostly, engaged and active. Another aspect that I found especially positive is that, in each unit, the various modules build momentum towards giving the students the necessary tools to express their views and feelings, with competence, on the particular topic they have been researching and discussing! Nothing seems patchy, disconnected or, worse, unnecessary! I believe that our class best experiences have been with the 3 Projects and the Final Portfolio! These activities gave all the students the space, the opportunity, and the drive to work together, among themselves and with the teacher: all wanted to improve their scripts, perfect their pronunciations, record each other's voices or videos. Lots of fun too; and sometimes we stayed an extra hour, simply because many did not want to leave! A side effect, I could say, of this course was that, after just 2 weeks all students knew their classmates' names, whereas in previous courses, sometimes they did not, even at the end of the semester! For sure, the course helped students to socialize much more. Some of them, on the last day of class told that, in this class they made new friends, something that normally does not happen.

Thanks again for the course and for letting me be part of it!

Alberto Lucchi

Dr. Karen Graf, Senior Lecturer of Spanish and FLED, and Coordinator of the FLED Program at KSU stated:

This creation of lower-level Italian course curriculum through Open Educational Resources (OER) seeks to transform a traditional high-cost textbook approach to language courses to a low-cost, more accessible approach, allowing for wider access to Italian language learning resources, both for current and future students, as well as the greater language educator community as a whole.

The newly transformed Italian Elementary I and II language curriculum provides students the opportunity to interact with engaging thematic units through relevant topics and meaningful authentic resources such as current videos, news articles, songs, and cultural blogs. These resources also allow students opportunities to critically reflect upon, make connections with, and compare topics of Italian language and culture and their own. Finally, this innovative approach to language curriculum provides students the context to demonstrate what they are able to do in Italian through practical communicative speaking and writing tasks as well as small-group project-based learning, incorporating both linguistic and intercultural competencies in engaging with Italian-language communities.

Ultimately, this OER Italian course curriculum facilitates student engagement by providing low-cost access to innovative, engaging, and meaningful language content that can evolve and innovate based on student needs and future learning contexts.

In addition, Dr. Lillyrose Veneziano Broccia, Director of the Italian Language Program at the University of Pennsylvania, stated:

During the ACTFL 2019 Convention in Washington, DC, I attended a presentation by Federica Santini, Renata Creekmur, and Andrea Scapolo entitled, "Using OER to Enhance Italian Language and Culture Classes." The presenters shared their research and the current outcomes of a grant-funded project with the aim of creating Open Educational Resources for Elementary I and II Italian courses. The pedagogical approaches and resulting materials that the presenters shared are inviting, engaging, and inspiring. I make these statements not only as an educator, but, more importantly, from the perspective of beginning-level language learners. The OER content, methods, and format are effective, welcoming, and inclusive in theory as well as practice. I can easily, and enthusiastically, envision this OER project being used by instructors and learners across the country just as they are. I also imagine this project serving as concrete inspiration and guidance to colleagues with the similar and necessary goals of removing obstacles from the path to language and culture learning – such as exclusive, non-representative, dated and expensive content. This presentation very clearly showcased how these OER resources meaningfully serve diverse learners in engaging and innovative ways. I look forward to the opportunities this project will offer and inspire - not only in Italian Studies, but rather in broader, multi-disciplinary educational contexts.

4. Sustainability Plan

Based on the full feedback we receive this semester, we will make adjustments, integrations, and updates to the content. Close monitoring will also occur in the next semesters of implementation.

- *Describe how your project team or department will offer the materials in the course(s) in the future, including the maintenance and updating of course materials.*

The OER we have collected and/or created are hosted on the online platform Softchalk, which we made public and open to everyone. We have also stored and made available our materials to our students online via D2L (the Learning Management System in use at KSU). As discussed in our proposal, our plan is to review the resources each semester and update them as needed by implementing the following strategies:

a) Monitoring effectiveness: we will periodically evaluate the effectiveness of the new format through surveys, interviews, peer and self-assessments, class observations.

b) Collection of students' feedback and evaluation of plan implementation.

c) Revisions and adjustments: all the feedback collected will be evaluated and used in making the necessary revisions and adjustments to the new courses.

We will also add new materials and resources that we create or identify online and incorporate in our lesson plans and in class teaching.

5. Future Plans
Describe any impacts or influences this project has had on your thinking about or selection of learning materials in this and other courses that you will teach in the future.

- *Describe any planned or actual papers, presentations, publications, or other professional activities that you expect to produce that reflect your work on this project.*

In November 2019, we presented our project at the National ACTFL Conference (Washington, DC, November 22-24) and received positive feedback from the audience. As the president of the American Association of Teachers of Italian (AATI), Beppe Cavatorta, Professor of Italian and Director of the Italian Language Program at the University of Arizona, stated:

"I had the pleasure to attend the presentation at ACTFL by Professors Santini, Scapolo and Creekmur about their project aimed at transforming the basic level Italian courses at Kennesaw State by adopting Open Educational Resources. I was genuinely impressed by the course they have been able to put online in such a short time for its content, for its structure, and for its look. Many Open Education Resources are very dry, often not suitable to replace a textbook, useful mostly to support it. The work of the Kennesaw trio instead is extremely pleasing to the eye and with its many interactive and varied exercises and its themes which are clearly of interest for this generation of students it is a beautiful tool that will save students a lot of money while at the same time providing them with rigorous, but at the same time exciting materials which will make their Italian experience something they will remember."

The PowerPoint of our presentation is also available on the ACTFL website. We plan to share the materials we created with the larger community of teachers of Italian to invite their feedback and contribution. The goal is to create a shared open repository of resources that the teachers of Italian can use, modify and contribute to by adding new materials. We also believe that our project can serve as a model for other language programs in Georgia and across the US. The fact that the German Program at KSU has recently successfully applied to the textbook transformation grant testifies of the leadership role our team has played with this project. Finally, in the future we are planning on expanding this new model to our Intermediate and Upper level language and culture classes, starting with Italian 2001 and 2002.

6. Description of Photograph

- *On the Final Report Submission page, you will be submitting a photo. In this document, list the names of the people shown in this separately uploaded photograph, along with their roles.*

The attached picture features the Italian Studies at KSU's team presentation at ACTFL 2019. From left to right, Dr. Andrea Scapolo (presenting), Dr. Federica Santini, Ms. Renata Creekmur.