



Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers  
Association canadienne des professeurs de langues secondes

# The Innovative Language Classroom Handbook

Leveraging Technology  
to Drive Learning



# The Innovative Language Classroom Handbook: Leveraging Technology to Drive Learning

## Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers (CASLT)

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CASLT encourages excellence in second and additional language teaching and learning throughout Canada by creating opportunities for professional learning, by encouraging research, and by facilitating the sharing of information and the exchange of ideas among second language educators.

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## The Innovative Language Classroom Handbook: Leveraging Technology to Drive Learning

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Canada 

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# INTRODUCTION

## Purpose

This handbook aims to support language teachers with resources, professional learning, and community building for implementing innovative teaching practices using technology. This handbook and the supporting digital resources provide concrete and practical strategies to enrich the language learning environment. These resources are accompanied by a series of professional learning workshops and videos that provide teachers and administrators with additional hands-on strategies for building community and supporting language students and teachers.

## Background

In 2022, the Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers (CASLT) published results from a study on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on second language teachers (*Pandemic and Practice: The Impact of COVID-19 on Second Language Teachers in Canada*). The study found that teaching a language online presents unique challenges for instruction and assessment. This handbook was developed using the findings from the study, as well as input from focus groups and surveys of new and experienced language teachers across Canada. Language educators from the focus groups identified the following common challenges when teaching languages in various online teaching environments:

- Transferring classroom activities and routines online in an engaging manner that builds strong relationships with students
- Coping with limited technology, Wi-Fi, and troubleshooting skills
- Managing workload while finding online resources and planning classes for new, often changing settings
- Ensuring the accuracy and integrity of assessments
- Communicating with students and caregivers and managing increased absenteeism (Dressler & Guida, 2022)



This handbook provides specific strategies to survive and thrive when faced with these common challenges. This project was developed with funding from the Government of Canada through the Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy in French Immersion and French Second-Language Programs.





## Structure of the Handbook

This handbook presents nine sections to address common challenges that language teachers face when implementing technology in the classroom. Each section outlines a challenge identified by teachers and provides possible actions and strategies to consider in the following format:

### 1. The Challenge

-  A question related to a common challenge
-  A brief description acknowledging the challenge and introducing possible solutions

### 2. Actions and Strategies

-  Three to five considerations to address the challenge
  - A list of sample strategies teachers can use
-  A collection of statements sharing reflections from new and experienced language teachers

### 3. Planning for Success

- The **Next Steps Planner** helps teachers plan and reflect on successes.
- **Further Resources** are provided for reference.



# #1 ENGAGE STUDENTS

## The Challenge



How can I increase engagement?



Making learning authentic and accessible to the specific needs of each student will increase engagement.

## Actions and Strategies



Make It Real

Students often engage more when language learning is grounded in authentic real-life tasks, as they can see how the learning applies outside the classroom (O'Brien, 2019b). Planning for action-oriented tasks that have students using the target language in authentic contexts will help them transfer language learning to real-life situations. Some sample strategies for grounding language learning in authentic contexts include the following:

- Incorporate multimedia by showing students current music videos, recent social media posts, or other creations in the target language.
- Engage students before class starts by having conversations with them in the target language as they arrive.
- Facilitate student-led conversations with peers in the target language. Consult the [Build Relationships and Community](#) section for more strategies.
- Maximize the technology students already use by assigning activities they can complete on their mobile device. Many online teaching tools have apps available for smartphones and tablets to facilitate mobile learning.
- Teach strategies for starting and maintaining conversations in the target language. Consider discussing various ways to greet someone, take turns, and ask questions.
- Plan for opportunities to offer student choice for target language activities. For example, provide a range of conversation topics for students to select, and invite students to choose the format in which they demonstrate their learning.



## Teacher Quotes — Leverage Routines



*I was always there early and I would just have conversations with them about life in the target language.*

*For the little kids, just being on technology is hard, so the expectations have to be super simple.*

*Routines, routines, routines! When students know what to do, the target language isn't as much of a barrier.*

*Implementing conversation time for both online and in-person classes allows students to build a stronger sense of community because they get to know one another in different groups, and the teacher learns about students' interests and daily lives outside of school.*

*Remember that teaching and reinforcing routines in the target language is not wasted time. It might take longer to teach the students how to open a breakout room in the target language, but that's great language learning for them! It's worth the investment.*





## Next Steps Planner

To build relationships and community, I am considering the following:

Strategies and actions	What I need	How it worked





## Further Resources — Implement Technology

- [CASLT Colab course catalogue](#) categories:
  - Technology and Blended Learning
- Log in to the CASLT CoLab to access the [Groups](#) and [Forums](#).
- CASLT publications:
  - [Facilitating Language Learning Through Technology: A Literature Review on Computer-Assisted Language Learning](#)
  - [Pandemic and Practice: The Impact of COVID-19 on Second Language Teachers in Canada](#)
- [Languages Build Video Contest](#): An annual contest with supporting resources for language learners to share how learning a language has impacted their life.

### Notes

This handbook supports language teachers with resources, professional learning, and community building for implementing innovative teaching practices using technology. Along with the supporting digital resource, it provides concrete and practical strategies to enrich the language learning environment. These resources are accompanied by a series of professional learning workshops and videos that provide teachers and administrators with additional hands-on strategies for building community and supporting language students and teachers.

