



## Upping the Ante in our Language Classrooms: Trauma-Informed Pedagogy during Covid Times

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*The experience of trauma, both national and personal, may inhibit learning and decrease learner motivation. As the pandemic raged across the U.S. and universities closed their doors in the spring of 2020, many university professors were forced to rethink their courses and investigate new pedagogies in order to interact effectively with their students in a new and unpredictable world. Our students had experienced a myriad of hardship, isolation, uncertainty, and fear by the time they enrolled in our Fall 2000 language classes.*

*In addition to techniques such as translanguaging and asset-based approaches, which allow our students to share their own identities and languages in the classroom while also developing their L2 proficiency, we intentionally implemented trauma-informed pedagogy in our Chinese and Italian language courses. Incorporating the principles of Trauma-informed Teaching and Learning proposed by Janice Carello[1], we not only created a structured, predictable, and flexible learning environment that fostered a sense of safety and trustworthiness, but also provided multiple opportunity for students to connect and collaborate. We argue that teachers can overcome the challenges of trauma and inspire learning by showing care and empathy and by building empowerment and resilience into their teaching.*

*In this paper, we will introduce the principles of trauma-informed pedagogy and share our course designs and learning activities to illustrate how these principles are implemented in our language courses. One example we utilize to describe our approach involves that of our speaking and writing prompts, which allowed for students to share a multitude of perspectives about their own experiences (their cultural identities, native languages, experiences at home and abroad, experiences of returning home or being displaced during the pandemic, their moments of reconnection with loved ones, and their experiences overcoming illness). We worked to create connections between our own students' experiences and the cultures they studied, allowing them to be active participants in the classroom as second-language learners. Overwhelmingly, students affirmed in their reflections that writing and talking about their own lives connected them with each other, with their families, with the countries they studied, and with the countries in which they found themselves during the pandemic. Furthermore, the enjoyable and reflective learning experience enhanced student agency in learning, and, in the end, allowed them to become more resilient in the midst of a worldwide crisis.*

**Keywords:** *community of practice; collaborative innovation network; COIN; professional development; collaboration; sharing.*

### References

- [1] <http://socialwork.buffalo.edu/content/dam/socialwork/home/teaching-resources/1-1-definition-principles-objectives.pdf>