

**Faculty-Created Working Group: MT for FL / MT for L2**  
**The role of Internet Translators in Foreign Language Classes**

This working group consisted of three members: Junjie Luo, Assistant Professor of Asian Studies, Anne Kerns, Visiting Assistant Professor of French, and Melanie Rubio Benitez, Teaching Assistant of Spanish. Our goal was to lay the groundwork for an inter-departmental discussion of policies and practices regarding the use of Machine Translators (MT) for graded assignments in Foreign Language (FL) classes, and to ascertain its demonstrated detriment or effectiveness in learning a Second Language (L2). Our work consisted of a search of scholarly publications on the topic of MT, a compilation and comparison of departments' policy language on the use of MT as "cheating", informal interviews with FL colleagues regarding perceptions of MT as a "tool or taboo", and meetings with members of Gettysburg College's Honor Commission and Mussleman Library staff on the subject of Academic Honesty and Plagiarism. Finally, in order to forge a path forward, we compiled and created some initial classroom activities where students can investigate the usefulness and efficiency of MT (such as Google Translate) in comparison and in conjunction with on-line dictionaries (such as wordreference.com). These activities can be introduced and used in each of the levels of FL taught at Gettysburg College, and adapted to any language.

To conclude our work this semester, we invited FL faculty and other interested parties to a lunch which involved a presentation of our findings and a round-table discussion. We had 13 participants at an especially busy time of the semester (the end); this good turn-out illustrates in itself the increasing importance and urgency of the issue examined by our group and its potential impact on teaching and learning FL. It was an extremely productive forum and all in attendance expressed thanks to our group for taking on the work of opening this door. It is to an awareness of a critical turning point in our profession, one that we can no longer ignore or stop, but that we need to continue to monitor and to face together proactively in order to strengthen our teaching and best serve our students.

Our group aimed to open this door for all of our FL colleagues, and to keep it open by sharing the information, resources, and classroom activities that we have gathered on the issue over the semester. This summer we plan to foster continual collaboration among FL faculty with the establishment of a digital "share point" on the JCCTL website that we can all refer to as we prepare for next semester and add to as we move on, and with a call for all to consider joining the working group as we re-form this Fall.

Next semester the group plans to re-visit our literature search for recent publications (2017-2018), and especially for research on the subject of enhancing or diminishing student learning through the use of MT. The research done so far has not fully taken into consideration that MT results are now accurate to the point where it is virtually impossible for a teacher to detect if a student has used MT for an assignment. Our group will continue to assess the appropriateness of prohibiting students' use of MT in a controlled setting and the utility of allowing them to use

MT for certain assignments and activities in order to enhance their digital literacy and develop their skills in their target foreign language. This can be approached through a formal survey of colleagues and eventually of students themselves, and a closer examination and careful re-designing of assignments that currently pose the greatest challenge to our notion of Academic Honesty. Finally, we plan to continue to encourage faculty to address this issue directly with students by collecting, refining, and creating classroom activities for each level of FL in order for students to better understand these new tools and applications and to be able to choose whether and how to use them for assignments and for everyday communication in their journey as life-long learners.

Our hope is that eventually each FL program at Gettysburg College will be represented in our working group, and that the JCCTL will continue to see the value in sponsoring this collaborative research and work toward making both small and big changes in our teaching for the benefit of student learning and skill development.