

Rosetta Stone: Compatible with Proficiency-Oriented Language Instruction and Blended Learning

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Language instruction has changed over the years and emphasizes these days meaningful interaction, language proficiency, target language use and active, inductive learning. In order to better prepare students for the demands of the 21st century, educators integrate more and more technology into language classes. Many schools and universities have transitioned to a blended learning format, consisting of face-to-face instruction and online learning. Moreover, since several schools and universities have already adopted Rosetta Stone for their language courses, this investigation evaluates the software and instructional content and its alignment with proficiency-oriented language instruction, 21st century skills, blended learning, and first-semester French textbooks. The assessment indicates that Rosetta Stone's instructional content aligns well with the curriculum of basic French courses and that any of the software's shortcomings could be easily addressed in the face-to-face portion of the language class.

Keywords: Rosetta Stones; computer-assisted language learning; blended learning; proficiency-oriented language teaching; French

INTRODUCTION

Rosetta Stone, the premier language learning software program with 8,000 corporations, 9,000 public and non-profit agencies, 20,000 educational institutions and millions of users worldwide (Rosetta Stone), has been gaining more and more popularity in recent years. Approaches to teaching languages in schools have changed over the past decades, moving away from discrete point grammar practice, translation, memorization, and explicit grammar explanations and towards focusing on meaningful interaction, language proficiency, target language use, and inductive learning. Educators also seek to integrate more technology into their classes in order to better prepare their learners for the demands of the 21st century. To this end, many language courses have transitioned to a blended learning format, combining face-to-face instruction with online components or e-

learning. In the past few years, several schools and universities have started using Rosetta Stone in their language classes. It is the objective of this paper to review the software program and its instructional content and to evaluate whether it aligns with proficiency-oriented language instruction, 21st century skills, blended learning, and first-semester French textbooks.

LITERATURE REVIEW

APPROACHES TO LANGUAGE TEACHING

Over the years, language educators seem to have continuously been trying to find the one best way for teaching a foreign language. However, the history of the teaching profession has been marked more often by controversy than by consensus. Often, new movements emerged, captured the attention of many educators, caused an upheaval in methods and materials, and then faded from view (Grittner, 1990). During the so-called “Age of Methods” from the 1950s to the 1980s, a number of different prescriptions for language teaching emerged. Situational Language Teaching evolved in the United Kingdom while Audio-Lingualism emerged in the United States. Several methods developed during this period as successors to these existing methods such as Silent Way, Suggestopedia, Community Language Learning, and Total Physical Response. In the 1980s, many practitioners and language educators still felt the need to reach some consensus about language teaching and more interactive ways of teaching language came about which collectively are called Communicative Language Teaching. This approach caused several spin-off approaches to come about such as The Natural Approach, Cooperative Language Learning, Content-Based Teaching, and Task-based Teaching. In an effort to establish uniform goals and standards for language proficiency, the ACTFL proficiency guidelines were developed in 1986. Instead of looking for one definitive approach to teaching, educators have begun looking for some organizing principle to facilitate the development of goals and objectives for language teaching. For a detailed description and comparison of these methods and approaches of language and teaching, see, for instance, Cook (2013); Larsen-Freeman & Anderson (2011); Richards & Rodgers (2001); Whong (2011).

PROFICIENCY-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING

In an attempt to identify some guiding principles for organizing and planning instruction in a foreign language, Omaggio (1983) derived five hypotheses that encompass the essence of proficiency-based language instruction and apply to any level of proficiency. Based on Omaggio’s original hypotheses and associated corollaries and her more recent extension (Hadley, 2001), a brief description of proficiency-based language teaching will be provided. It has to be noted, however, that proficiency-oriented language teaching represents a general framework for organizing instruction, curriculum and assessment rather than a method or theory.

Input. Students need to have opportunities to learn a language in context and apply their knowledge in real-life situations. This provides opportunities to practice language in meaningful discourse rather than using disconnected word lists and isolated sentences. Thus, lessons should be unified thematically, presenting new vocabulary and expressions in context. This should include teaching the cultural connotations of these words and expressions to create an understanding how their meaning is embedded in the culture of the people that speak the language (Hypothesis 5). Furthermore, like many other recent methods/approaches, authentic language should be used in the classroom and outside

(Hypothesis 1). This includes authentic written language samples such as stories, articles, recipes, website, and blogs as well as spoken language samples such as TV, native speaker dialogs, podcasts, and songs, all available on the internet. Cultural comparisons and discussions should also be based on authentic cultural material and realia. Finally, one should not forget the natural language that is provided by the language teacher each day in class.

Output. Students should be encouraged to express their own meaning in personalized, communicative activities. Using language for a real purpose means students need to learn to create with the language, to use it imaginatively instead of always focusing on mainly manipulative language practice. This includes paraphrasing, thinking up a variety of possible answers, letting students be resourceful and original with the language. That means, after providing students initially with some vocabulary and expressions, the target language should be used immediately in creative, personalized ways (Hypothesis 1). Students need to perform a variety of functional tasks that have been carefully sequenced and are integrated into the various lessons in order to be able to cope with the real-world communication demands they will face. These tasks or operational language learning goals include greetings, describing their own identity and preferences, ordering food, making purchases, to name but a few (ACTFL). Apart from speaking, the other modalities (listening, reading, and writing) need to be equally incorporated into proficiency-oriented language classes (Hypothesis 2).

Student role. A student-centered classroom with plenty of small group and paired communicative activities is essential for proficiency-based teaching. This allows students to practice language in context and for real communicative purposes to further develop their oral proficiency. Communicative activities among students are most effective if they involve the actual exchange of information, i.e. using language as a means to an end. In a student-centered classroom, learners take an active, involved role in the learning process and take (some) responsibility in their learning. Student activities should involve active cognitive processes such as creating, problem-solving, reasoning.

Teacher role. In a student-centered classroom, the teacher's main role is to help and encourage students to develop their skills, rather than merely transmitting information by lecturing (Jones, 2007). During partner and group activities teachers circulate in the classroom to offer assistance, keep students on task, make note of problems and provide feedback. As learners produce language, various forms of instruction and evaluative feedback can be useful in advancing their skills towards more precise and coherent language use. Thus, there is a role for form-focused instruction in a proficiency-based approach, but it has to be used in conjunction with communicative language teaching practices (Hypothesis 3). Finally, language instruction needs to respond to not only the students' affective and cognitive needs but also their different personalities, their preferences and individual learning styles also need to be taken into account (Hypothesis 4). Galloway & Labarca (1990) sum it up nicely: "What is called for is not a teaching method, but a teaching repertoire." (p. 115).

TECHNOLOGY AND BLENDED LEARNING

21st century learning and the use of technology. Concerned about preparing today's students for tomorrow's world, the Partnership for 21st Century Skills and the International Society for Technology in Education have drafted frameworks and guidelines outlining what students need to know to meet the challenges of the modern world. In addition to core subjects (such as language arts, math, science and history), these two organizations emphasize the importance of including 21st century interdisciplinary themes (such as global awareness, financial, economic, business and entrepreneurial literacy, civic and health

literacies,) and weaving 21st century skills (such as creativity and innovation, communication and collaboration, research and information fluency, critical thinking, problem solving and decision-making) into core subjects. The 21st century skills can be divided into three categories: (1) learning and innovation, (2) digital literacy skills, and (3) career life. The first category encourages (a) the creation of meaningful and authentic assessment and activities that promote higher order thinking skills and (b) the integration of lifelong skills and content into lessons, units, and activities. The second category emphasizes the need to incorporate technology into the classroom. Finally, the third category underlines the need to work effectively and creatively with team members.

As one of the 21st century skills and demanded by the digital age, the integration of technology into language teaching, language curricula, and assessment is necessary. Besides preparing students for the demands of the digital age, there are many other reasons for integrating technology into the language classroom. Students are generally technology-literate and have become accustomed to using it. Technology can assist and enhance language learning and differentiates instruction. Since students learn at different rates and have different learning styles, technology can help reach all students in different ways. Technology can engage students to be active participants and to be involved in meaningful, interactional activities. Using technology also motivates students and provides the opportunity to work collaboratively as a team. Furthermore, technology can help relate the curriculum to life outside of the classroom, connect US classrooms to classrooms abroad, and provide authentic language and samples of the target language. In this sense, it makes language study practical and significant giving students a chance to actively use the language for real purposes. Finally, technology can add many dimensions to the language classroom.

BLENDED LEARNING

Blended learning refers to a combined teaching method, namely a combination of standard face-to-face teaching with online components or e-learning (Hubackova, Semradova, & Frydrychova, 2011). This incorporation of online learning in classroom education has been referred to by other terminology such as web-enhancement, mixed modes, computer-mediated communication, or hybrid learning. Two basic types of teaching can be combined with this approach: synchronous and asynchronous teaching. Synchronous teaching refers to teaching in real-time where students experience learning simultaneously and can react mutually. Asynchronous teaching, on the other hand, happens at different times to different students where they can choose their individual pace, but cannot react mutually in real-time (Hubackova et al, 2011). There are three different approaches to blended learning: (1) storage space, (2) web as add-on, and (3) “perfect blend” (Scagnoli, 2005). First, educators might use the online component merely as storage space for students to have access to all course materials on the web. In the second approach, new materials are taken from the web and web-enabled tools and applications are used to enhance classroom learning. Finally, in the perfect blend, classroom and web complement each other. Here, the web is used to enhance classroom teaching in that the materials from the web and the materials from the face-to-face classroom are perfectly integrated (Scagnoli, 2005).

There are many advantages of using blended learning in foreign language teaching, especially in a time, when the face of education is rapidly changing. First and foremost, blended learning encourages the use of technology, preparing students for the demands of the 21st century outside of class. The online component allows easy inclusion of many audio and video files as well as authentic language and culture into the class. It encourages and motivates students to learn, making language-learning creative, and fun. In an online

environment, students choose the time, place to study, and have 24-hour access allowing flexibility in their schedules. In addition, different learning styles can easily be accommodated in the online part. In a blended learning environment, students can learn and use the language when they are not physically in class, thus extending learning to outside of class. Class time can then be used for valuable communication among learners and with the teacher, for the practice of language functions, and for the integration of the online content. This way, learners still have access to the teacher, consulting them and communicating with them in class.

Among the disadvantages of a blended learning approach is, primarily, the difficulty to create well-integrated blended learning courses, i.e. where the online content perfectly enhances the face-to-face portion of a class. Moreover, there is a constant need for both faculty and students to learn about new technologies and receive training in how to use them effectively. In addition, even though we live in an age of technology, there are educators and students who are reluctant to use new technologies. Blended learning courses might then become frustrating for students who lack the necessary technology skills to participate in such practices. At the same time, educators might be frustrated by having to change their traditional teaching method to a blended one, having to learn to use technology and encourage students to do the same. Due to the learning curve of some technology tools, blended learning might be more time-consuming (at least in the beginning) for both teachers and learners.

Most importantly, though, blended learning has to be about improving and enhancing learning, about helping students learn how to build new knowledge using this combination of traditional face-to-face classrooms and new online tools to gain proficiency in the foreign language.

ROSETTA STONE AND SUGGESTED ACTIVITES

Rosetta Stone, a commercially available, stand-alone, all-in-one language learning software package, which used to be mainly utilized by US government employees, has been gaining more and more importance among language learners in all different situations. First introduced in 1996, the first version of Rosetta Stone featured nine level-one language courses (Dutch, English, French, German, Italian, Mandarin Chinese, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish) and four level-two courses (English, French, German, Spanish). The current version 4 TOTALe was released in September 2010 and is a software suite containing Rosetta Course (core language-learning lessons), Rosetta Studio (live sessions with a native speaker), Rosetta World (interactive social language-learning community with games), and TOTALe Mobile Companion (supplemental lessons for on-the-go). It is compatible with Windows and Mac-based computers with anywhere access on any web-enabled Windows or Mac device or with mobile apps on iPhone, iPad and Android devices.

According to Rosetta Stone's website, there are "millions of satisfied learners, 8000 corporations, 900 public and non-profit agencies, 20000 educational institutions and millions of learners worldwide" who use the language learning software (Rosetta Stone).

ROSETTA COURSE FRENCH

Rosetta Stone version 4 French consists of a total of five levels; each level is comprised of four units; and in each unit, there are four core lessons and one milestone. The duration to complete a level in Rosetta Stone is roughly 40-50 hours. Each lesson contains generally the following components: a core lesson, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

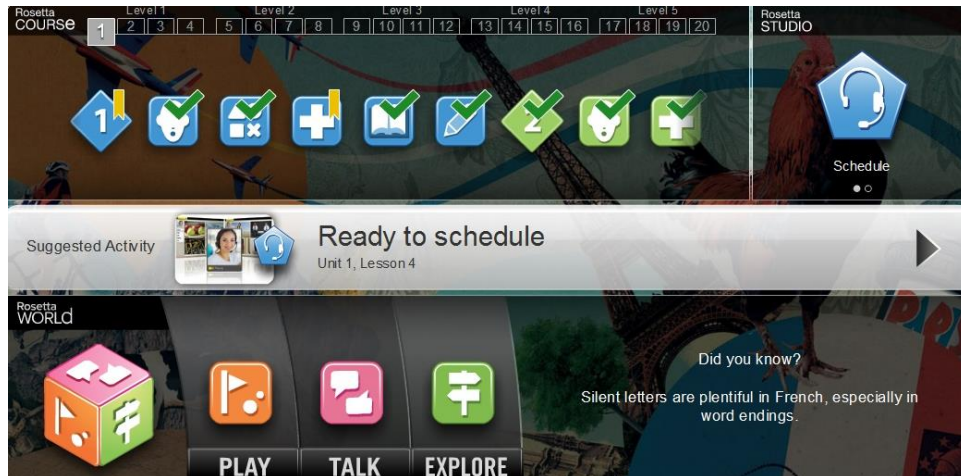


Figure 1: Rosetta Stone TOTALe Version 4, main menu (Rosetta Stone, 2014).

The TOTALe main menu in Figure 1 above is the spring board into the language program with the levels and lessons in the upper left corner, with the Rosetta World extensions ‘play’, ‘talk’, ‘explore’ in the bottom left corner, with the cultural information blurbs rotating in the bottom right corner and with a link to schedule a session with a native speaker (Rosetta Studio) in the upper right corner.

Core lesson. The core lesson contains all the new vocabulary, grammar, and functions of a lesson. New items are introduced in an inductive manner using pictures and previously acquired items. On some screens, learners see pictures associated with words and are prompted to provide a missing piece to the puzzle. Sometimes a native speaker says words or phrases (with or without additional written prompt) and the learner selects the appropriate picture. In Unit 1 Lesson 2, for example, the core lesson contains the following instructional content: food vocabulary, people and animals, verbs such as eating, drinking, driving, walking, sleeping, subject pronouns, negation and basic questions and answers.

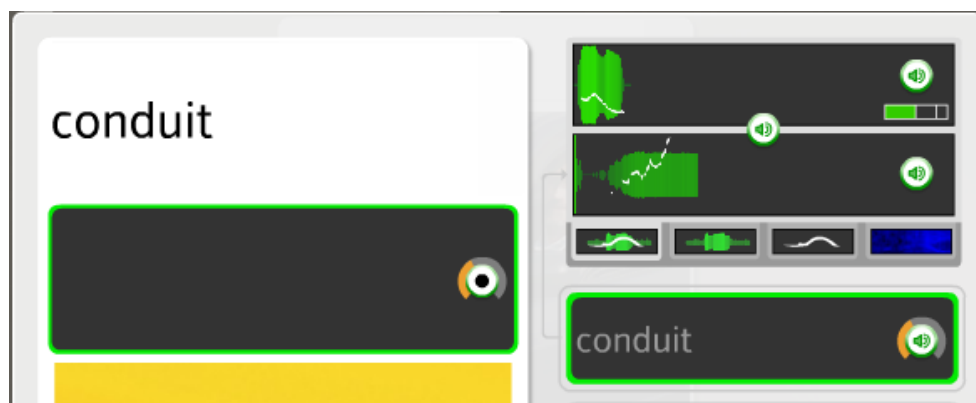


Figure 2. Speech recognition window with waves of native speaker and learner pronunciation (Rosetta Stone, 2014).

Pronunciation. The pronunciation activity allows learners to work on their pronunciation of the new vocabulary by repeating after a native speaker and recording their attempts. Often, words will be broken down into syllables to practice pronunciation and to contrast them with similar syllables. Syllables such as *poi-sson*, *po-li-cier*, *so-leil*, *sty-lo*, *bu-vez* are, for instance, practiced in Unit 1 Lesson 3. Moreover, issues such as *liaison* (the pronunciation of a latent word-final consonant immediately before a following vowel

sound) and *elision* (the suppression of a final unstressed vowel (usually [ə]) immediately before another word beginning with a vowel) are also the focus of the pronunciation activities. Elisions such as *je m'appelle* and *comment tu t'appelles* are two examples introduced in Unit 2 Lesson 3. Phrases such as *mon ami, nos enfants* and *dix ans* are examples of French liaison and are the focus of the pronunciation activity in Unit 2 Lesson 1. The speech recognition software as shown in Figure 2 evaluates learners' pronunciation in all of these types of activities, allowing learners to compare their pronunciation to that of native speakers.

Vocabulary. The vocabulary activity practices the new vocabulary with pictures, recycling previously introduced material to teach new words by elimination. The native language of the learners is never utilized to present new vocabulary. The word or expression (or in later stages, sentence) is written in French on top of the screen and pronounced by one of several native speakers, both male and female. The learner selects from several pictures on the page the one described by the word or expression. Learners have the option to listen to the new vocabulary item as often as needed. In Unit 1 Lesson 1, the first vocabulary lesson, nouns such as *femme, garçon, homme, fille* and verbs like *boire, courir, lire, écrire, manger* are introduced among others.

Grammar. The grammar activity focuses on the grammar and structures from the core lesson where learners select captions for pictures choose from drop-down menus, select the appropriate subject or verb conjugation, listen, and select pictures. Frequently, learners are asked to choose the correct grammatical form from a drop-down menu, such as the appropriate article or verb form (see Figure 3). The sentence with the blank is initially pronounced by the native speaker; once the correct form is selected, the entire sentence is pronounced again. Grammar is also practiced by presenting a picture and learners selecting the appropriate caption among several options. Finally, learners are asked to pronounce the correct sentence or phrase.

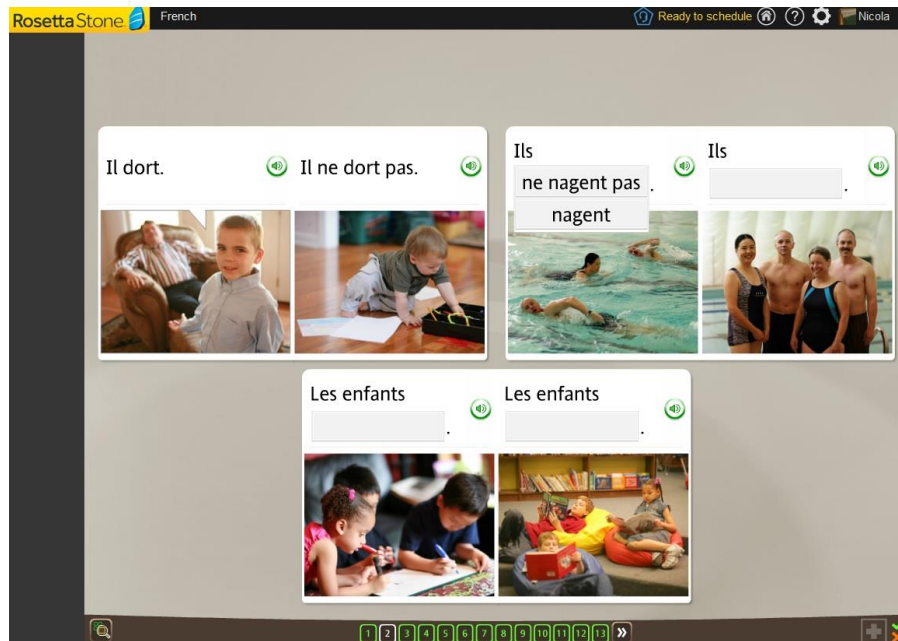


Figure 3. Grammar lesson, Unit 1 Lesson 2 (Rosetta Stone, 2014).

In Unit 1 Lesson 2, for example, the verb forms of the verb *avoir*, the partitive article *de l', du*, the negative particle *de, d'* and the negation *ne...pas* are practiced.

Reading. The title ‘reading’ for this section seems a bit misleading for today’s educators. It does not focus on reading for understanding, but rather on dividing words and phrases into syllables and distinguishing them from other, similar syllables. It focuses in detail on some of the newly introduced vocabulary providing learners with opportunities to pronounce and hear difficult and similar syllables and sounds.



Figure 4. Reading Activity, Unit 1 Lesson 2 (Rosetta Stone, 2014).

In Unit 1 Lesson 2, for example, words such as *café*, *chat*, *court* and *conduit* are pronounced as well as key syllables from these words like *cha-*, *ca-*, *cou-*, *con-* (see Figure 4). After working on the pronunciation, learners hear a syllable and have to select in writing the syllable they heard.

Speaking. The speaking activity has learners initially repeat after the native speakers and then make them say their own sentences like answers to questions, or asking questions or describing the picture. Most of the time learners repeat words, phrases, or sentences after native speakers and recording their answers. The voice recognition software then accepts or rejects each of the attempts, often prompting the learner to pronounce a word repeatedly (see Figure 2 above). The prompts are pronounced by different native speakers, both male and female. Then, learners are asked to speak without a prompt following a model. In Unit 1 Lesson 3, for example, greetings *bonjour* and *au revoir* and verb forms *boit*, *boivent*, *écrit*, *écrivent*, *court*, *courent* are practiced.

Listening. The listening activity focuses on the learner’s listening skills asking them to hear sentences and phrases taken from the core lesson and to select the appropriate picture depicting the action or item. In this type of activity, there are no written prompts, but learners can hear the aural prompt as often as needed. Sentences such as *Le garçon boit du lait*, *elle lit un livre* or *les adultes courent* are practiced in Unit 1 Lesson 2.

Writing. Finally, the writing activity reviews the previously encountered vocabulary and grammar, and reviews pronunciation. Then, learners choose syllables from drop-down menus to complete sentences and phrases or type entire words, phrases and sentences. In Unit 1 Lesson 2, vocabulary from the lesson is first recycled by giving a written prompt

and learners selecting the corresponding picture. Next, some syllables are practiced by hearing a given syllable's pronunciation and picking the given spelling of this syllable from words from the lesson. Finally, learners hear a prompt and type what they hear, for example, *un journal*, *un café*, and *il conduit*. At the end of the following lesson will be a review of the previous lesson. All of these components comprise Rosetta Course.

ROSETTA STUDIO FRENCH

In addition to Rosetta Course, the core-language learning portion of the program, learners have access to Rosetta Studio and Rosetta World (see Figure 1 above). Rosetta Studio allows learners to practice language in a real-time setting through live sessions with a Studio Coach who is a native speaker of the language. Through TOTALe online services, learners have access to 4 25 minutes live, online sessions per month with the Studio Coach and up to 3 other learners. Private one-on-one sessions are also available. These sessions are entirely in the L2 focusing on the material covered in the lessons/units and beyond. The learner uses a microphone to communicate with the Studio Coach who is connected via video to the learner so that visual cues can be given to the learner, but the learner's identity remains hidden.

ROSETTA WORLD FRENCH

Rosetta World represents an interactive social language learning community where learners have the opportunity to play language games either by themselves or with a partner to practice the new language skills. A chat room is also available to make connections with other people learning the same language. This component of Rosetta Stone contains 3 sections: (1) play, (2) talk and (3) explore. In the play section, learners can play games by themselves or with other learners to work on their listening, reading, writing skills and to practice grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. In *Buzzbingo*, learners hear a story and click on all the words on the bingo card they hear. The story is purposefully at least i+1 and contextualized to challenge learners' listening skills. In *Picari*, learners hear a prompt and pick the matching picture from a stack. *Super Bubble Mania* focusses on hearing syllables: learners pop the bubbles in the color of the syllable they hear. Finally, *MemGo* is a memory game where learners match a phrase or sentence with a picture.

In the talk section, learners engage in speaking or typing with a partner through collaborative games. In *Identi*, learners have a name tag with a picture and have to describe themselves. The partner guesses the character. In *Contrasto*, the two players have each a picture of a scene that they need to describe in order to find the differences between the two scenes. This can be done either in speaking or in writing. In *MetaTag*, partners describe the same picture in writing, if they use the same word, they earn points. In *Replica*, the partners will see slightly different scenes. The learner with the full scene describes it and the partner drags the missing items onto his scene. Finally, there is an open conversation where partners can talk; if needed with prompts. The explore section contains interactive stories written and narrated by native speakers that supplement the lessons. Learners have the option to read and listen to the story, to only listen to the story and to read and record the story.

ALIGNMENT WITH BASIC FRENCH COURSES

In order to evaluate how well Rosetta Stone aligns with basic French programs, the vocabulary, functions, grammar and culture were taken from *Horizons*, an introductory, college-level French book, and compared to the instructional content of Rosetta Stone.

Since most introductory French textbooks follow a similar sequence, the interpretation of this comparison is valid for most beginning French courses even when not using *Horizons*.

Rosetta Stone Units 1-3 align generally very well with the content of a basic French university first-semester course or secondary school first-year course. First of all, Rosetta Stone and *Horizons* generally introduce the same vocabulary and themes, such as numbers, colors, adjectives, clothing, furniture, housing, family, personal belongings, food, greetings, days of the week (see Appendices A and B). However, there are a few themes that are not part of the first part of Rosetta Stone, but that can be found in basic French textbooks. Classroom vocabulary, classroom communication, university vocabulary and fields of study as well as the alphabet, for instance, do not exist in the early units of Rosetta Stone. This is understandable since Rosetta Stone, for one, is a language-learning program geared toward any language learner, not necessarily only college students. Also, some of these themes are not applicable early on in an immersion setting, where the goal is to get learners to use the language quickly. However, Rosetta Stone offers some additional word themes such as professions, languages, animals, surroundings, countries, body parts, seasons that are not necessarily part of first-semester introductory French courses. In terms of grammar, Rosetta Stone and basic French textbooks are very similar (see Appendices A and B). Structures such as indefinite and definite articles, basic and high frequency verbs, adjectives, subject pronouns, question words, possessive adjectives, and prepositions are treated in both language-learning solutions. The basic French textbook also introduces verb + infinitive structures, numbers above 100, adverbs, periphrastic future, imperative, and the pronoun *y*. It is obvious that these structures would not be essential in a true immersion setting which explains their absence in Rosetta Stone. Rosetta Stone, on the other hand, teaches irregular verbs (*lire, écrire, boire*), the relative pronoun *qui*, reflexive verbs and prepositions with countries and cities early on because they are frequent in immersion settings. Finally, in terms of functions, both language learning solutions are similar, but the basic French textbook covers more different functions in its rigorous curriculum than the software (see Appendices A and B). They both cover greetings, asking and answering questions, describing people, describing location of people and things, counting. The textbook also includes talking about one's schedule, classes, communicating in class, giving one's address, saying what one does in their spare time, weather, and activities. Rosetta Stone, on the other hand, also includes talking about professions, what country, city people are from, and what languages people speak.

ALIGNMENT WITH PROFICIENCY-BASED TEACHING, 21ST CENTURY SKILLS, AND BLENDED LEARNING

Rosetta Stone, a powerful, multi-media immersion language program, is an ideal way to integrate technology into language classes and encourage digital literacy, an important 21st century skill. Through its varied means of instruction, Rosetta Stone addresses different styles, keeps learners active and involved, and allows learners to connect with other French learners from around the world.

As an immersion language program, Rosetta Stone also aligns well with proficiency-based language learning. The new language is learned in context and without target language use. It introduces a range of functions and tasks, focuses on linguistic accuracy, and addresses a variety of learning styles with audio, visual, written clues, games, chat, and face-to-face conversations. All modalities (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) are practiced with Rosetta Stone. Students take an active role in the learning process and take responsibility in their own learning.

Finally, the premise of blended learning is the incorporation of online learning with face-to-face instruction. Rosetta Stone offers asynchronous teaching and learning in

Rosetta Course, but synchronous teaching and learning in Rosetta World, Rosetta Studio and through chat. This language learning software suite allows a “near-perfect blend” with a basic French curriculum. Based on the above alignment of Rosetta Stone and basic French textbooks, Rosetta Stone would make an excellent complement to a blended learning language class.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF ROSETTA STONE

Rosetta Stone is an interesting, fun, and engaging way to get students to use and practice the language outside of class. It differentiates instruction and addresses a variety of different learning styles with its varied input: writing, audio, video, pictures. This language program can help all students, no matter how fast or how slowly they work since every learner can complete the course at their own pace. The content is much more realistic than the material that accompanies current French textbooks: The material is geared towards adults and is not based on one specific textbook. Learners acquire a wide range of vocabulary and functions that align well with basic French textbooks. Additionally, Rosetta Stone focuses on pronunciation in each of its lessons. This is very important especially in French where pronunciation and spelling do not align. Pronunciation is often neglected in language classes due to time constraints and the amount of new vocabulary covered. Another strong feature of Rosetta Stone is the fact that previously learned material is continuously recycled throughout the learning process. Vocabulary, grammar and functions recur and are used as a basis to introduce new instructional content, hopefully achieving some great deal of retention. Plentiful input for new material is provided in a variety of formats throughout each lesson: via pictures, audio, written language. Most importantly, no L1 input is ever provided, even for vocabulary. Students learn to associate vocabulary words with concepts and pictures rather than a word or expression in their native language. Each lesson focuses on various skills: vocabulary, grammar, listening, reading, writing, and pronouncing. The only skill that is less practiced is interacting with a partner or another speaker of the language. With Rosetta World, however, learners do have the option to interact with other learners of the language and with native speaker coaches. This helps learners connect with people outside of class, maybe even abroad. Rosetta Stone also helps to relate studying a language to life outside of class. Since it was not created to accompany any specific textbook and was conceptualized to teach language to any adult, it focuses on content relevant to life in the real world. In terms of use, Rosetta Stone is easy to use for both teachers and learners with a low learning curve. Hardly any training – if at all – is needed to successfully use Rosetta Stone. Finally, since Rosetta Stone is an all-in-one solution it proves to be less frustrating for students knowing exactly where to go, where to find material and what to do next.

There are some weaknesses of Rosetta Stone. First of all, there is less focus on speaking than would be ideal in an immersion environment. In each lesson, there is a lot of focus on pronouncing words, phrases and sentences, but there is very little emphasis on speaking to negotiate meaning. As a stand-alone program this would be a huge shortcoming. However, as a complement in a blended learning environment this is not as essential. Rosetta Stone would be the eLearning component outside of class and class time could be devoted to interaction. Along the same lines, Rosetta Stone does not focus on a lot of student-to-student interaction in its lessons. This type of interaction is only available through Rosetta World where learners can interact with other learners in speaking and writing during chat, games and with a native speaker and other learners during the speaking appointment. Another shortcoming of Rosetta Stone as a stand-alone program is the lack of culture integrated into the content of each lesson. Some cultural information is presented in the learners’ native language, but it is outside of the lessons. These short cultural blurbs scroll

at the bottom of the main menu before entering the actual activities. And since the pictures used to present new vocabulary and grammar are culturally independent so they can be used in multiple languages as prompts, the actual lessons do not contain any target culture information. This is in line with Lafford, Lafford, and Sykes (2007) who found in their study of stand-alone language programs that the technical infrastructure of Rosetta Stone is outstanding (graphics, videos, pictures, speech recognition), but that, for instance, culturally authentic task-based activities are lacking (p. 516). This again can be alleviated in a blended learning environment where the focus on culture can be part of the face-to-face classroom. Another potential shortcoming of Rosetta Stone, especially as a stand-alone language-learning program is the great amount of attrition in participation that was attested (Nielson, 2011). Many adult subjects of Nielson's study only logged into the account or completed about 10 hours or less of the program. Only a very small number of participants completed 50 hours or more of language study. Benson (2007) and more explicitly Fernandez-Toro (1999) and Nielson (2011) acknowledge that self-directed learners require interpersonal support in order to succeed. A blended learning environment can solve this issue. The integration of the e-learning component (Rosetta Stone) with the face-to-face lessons gives learners the support and encouragement they might need, and allows educators to keep students on track. Another weakness is the way to type accents in Rosetta Stone. When typing words, phrases, or sentences, a keyboard with some accented letters appears, but it lacks some others. It is impossible to type an apostrophe in words like *l'arbre*. Instead, typing a space is required. Similarly, the œ ligature does not exist and learners type words without it. It becomes obvious why these diacritical marks are not included in a complete immersion program since learners would not know about their existence. However, as a complement for a blended learning course, where learners have access to textbooks and other written material, the correct spelling with apostrophes and œ ligatures is important. Finally, some material that is generally found in basic French textbooks is completely missing from Rosetta Stone such as classroom communication, university vocabulary, alphabet, imperative, to name a few. Several participants in Nielson's (2011) study, for instance, commented on the general nature of the content that is not tied specifically to a certain language curriculum, textbook or work environment. Specialty vocabulary and functions are missing. This again is understandable because these topics are either not applicable in an immersion environment or not applicable to all learners or are simply not too important to improve initial language proficiency.

CONCLUSION

Based on this review, Rosetta Stone would be a valuable addition to any blended learning basic French language course. Its instructional content aligns very well with existing basic French textbooks and offers an interesting, dynamic, and easy-to-use platform for learners to practice the language outside of class. Using the software from a technological perspective as well as practicing content based on the needs of an immersion setting helps to transform language learners into global citizens of the 21st century. During the face-to-face class sessions some of the shortcomings of Rosetta Stone can be addressed and eliminated in order to create a complete and rewarding blended learning language experience that focuses on building students' proficiency in the language. To achieve a "near-perfect blend", class time would be well spent with a focus on interaction among students, negotiation of meaning and the emphasis of cultural differences. Due to the lack of research on the effectiveness of Rosetta Stone in general and in education settings more specifically, further research is needed. Classroom research on the effectiveness of Rosetta Stone in a blended-learning environment would be fruitful, especially in comparison with traditional textbook-specific material.

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APPENDIX

Instructional Content Rosetta Stone Units 1-3

U/L	Vocabulary	Grammar	Function	Culture
U1 L1	Femme, homme, garçon, fille Manger, boire, courir, lire, écrire, nager	Article indéfini Article défini Il, elle, ils, elles Conjuration : lit/lisent, écrit/écrivent		
U1 L2	Bonjour Nourriture Animaux Voiture, vélo Conduire, marcher	Avoir + article indéfini Négation Les articles Qu'est-ce que c'est ? C'est un/une... Questions avec est-ce que – oui/non	Greeting Asking/answering questions Who has what	
U1 L3	Couleurs Fleur, ciel, soleil, lune, herbe Professions activités	Être Avoir Adjective agreement Qu'est-ce que l'homme fait / vous faites? Est-ce que vous êtes... ? Professions Il est/c'est	Describing how people / things are Talking about professions	
U1 L4	Chiffres 1-6 Vêtements Meubles Acheter, porter	Il y a... Combien y a-t-il? Qui... ? Avoir Acheter, porter	Talking about items, colours	
U1 L5	Milestone	Qu'est-ce que vous faites ? Qu'est-ce que c'est ? Qu'est-ce que vous avez ?	Picture Story ; Review	
U2 L1	La famille Chiffres 6-12 Age	Adjectifs possessifs Avoir âge Lit/lisent	Age, Who does what activity	
U2 L2	Meubles, habitations, technologie, chambres	Prépositions sous, sur, dans Tu es/vous êtes Où est... ?	Describe where things are Describe where people are	

	Assis, debout Embrasser, serrer dans ses bras	Grand/gros		
U2 L3	Ville, pays, pont, parc, rue Pays, villes professions	Habiter Prépositions à, en, dans Prépositions de, des Près de, loin de Du, de la, des, de l' Etre de	Describe where people live, where they are from, where places are located Talk about professions	
U2 L4	Vêtements Couleurs Adjectifs Cheveux bruns/blonds/roux Avoir soif/faim, chaud/froid Etre fatigué/malade Grand-mère, grand-père	Comment allez- vous ? Avoir faim/soif Avoir chaud/froid Moi/je toi/tu Marron/brun Ecouter / regarder Debout/assis	Describe how people look (hair, clothing, color) Describe how people feel	
U3 L1	A l'intérieur /extérieur matin/après- midi/soir/nuit Où/quand Mais, et 13-20 hôpital, parc, école, restaurant	-er verbs jouer, travailler, déjeuner, dîner après/avant de + infinitif boire, prendre direct object pronouns	Times of the day, locations	
U3 L2	Semaine,mois,jour Jours de la semaine Jouer à Goûter/sentir Body parts Seasons De quel pays Se promener	Jouer à Goûter/sentir De quel pays Se promener	Months, weeks, years Days of the week Seasons	
U3 L3	Langues Gens, animaux, personne, animal 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60 enseigner, étudier Monsieur, Madame	Parle en anglais Lit l'anglais Ce, cette Relative pronoun qui Combien de ? Conjugaisons S'appelle, m'appelle	What people speak, teach, study How many there are	

APPENDIX B

Instructional Content Horizons Chapters 1-5

Ch.	Vocabulary	Grammar	Function	Culture
P	Formules de politesse Salutations familières		Greeting people	L'heure officielle *Shaking hands, bise, monsieur, madame, mademoiselle
	Chiffres de 0-30 Jours de la semaine		Counting Describing your week	*counting on fingers, first day of week
	Autoportrait Heure		Talk about self and schedule	*foreign language study; workday
	En cours Expressions utiles Alphabet		Communicating in class	*homework
1	Gens à l'université	C'est vs il/elle est + adjectifs	Identifying people Describing appearance	Les études *études universitaires
	personnalités	Pronoms sujets, être, négation Questions	Describing personality	*étapes système d'éducation
	Campus et quartier	Genre, article indéfini, il y a	Describing university area	*campus, université en France
	Université et cours	Article défini	Talking about studies	*études de langues
2	Passe-temps	infinitif	Saying what you like to do	Le café et le fast-food *passe-temps en France
	Week-end	Verbes en -er, adverbes	Saying how you spend free time	*Activité sportive/musique
	Journée	Mots interrogatifs Questions par inversion	Asking about someone's day	*Discretion

	Au café	Chiffres 30-100 argent	Going to the café	*Service compris, €
3	Logement	Chiffres 100+ Nombres ordinaux	Talking about where you live	Le Québec d'aujourd'hui *premier étage
	Effets personnels	Avoir Prépositions	Talking about your possessions	*accent canadien
	Meubles et couleurs	Adjectifs possessifs	Describing your room	*Faire le tour d'appartement
	Renseignements	Adjectifs quel et ce	Giving address and phone number	*2 ans d'études générales
4	Famille	Expressions avec avoir	Describing your family	La francophonie en Louisiane et ses origines *scolarité en anglais en Louisiane
	Temps libre	Aller, preposition à, pronom y On et l'impératif	Saying where you go in your free time	*Quoi faire à Lafayette
	Week-end prochain	Futur immediate dates	Saying what you are going to do	*Culture créole
	Moyens de transport	Prendre, venir Moyens de transport	Planning how to get there	*Les Acadiens
5	---			Les loisirs des Français

	Temps et projets	Faire, expression ne...rien décrire le temps Expressions avec faire	Discussion weather and activities	*centigrades
	Vêtements	Pronoms le, la, l', les	Deciding what to wear and buying clothes	*les tailles

