

CALL FOR PAPERS:

Sessions Organized by the MLA Forum on Second-Language Teaching & Learning (SLTL)

2027 Modern Language Association (MLA) Annual Convention

January 7-10, 2027 in Los Angeles, CA

The MLA Forum on Second-Language Teaching & Learning (SLTL) invites submissions for two guaranteed and two non-guaranteed sessions at the 2027 MLA annual convention. Please see the Calls for Papers below and be in touch with the designated contact person for interest and questions. The deadline for 300-word abstracts is March 20, 2026.

Session 1: “Popular Culture and Language Education in the Digital Age”

Organized by Hae-Young Kim (Duke University)
(guaranteed, in-person session)

Perspectives on popular culture in education range from enthusiasm about its motivational and emancipatory potential to concerns about the encroachment of commercialism into educational spaces. As technological expansion and media convergence continue to reshape everyday life, popular culture has become increasingly embedded in educational contexts, making it crucial to examine its role in language teaching and learning. Recent scholarship calls for teaching languages not only *with or through* popular culture, but also *for and about* it, foregrounding learners’ critical engagement with popular culture texts, practices, and industries (Werner & Tegge, 2020).

This panel explores the affordances and tensions of engaging popular culture in post-secondary language education. Drawing on Jenkins’s (2006) conceptualization of popular culture as participatory practice, it highlights the blurred boundaries between producers and consumers and the collaborative creation, circulation, and contestation of meaning. Research has identified numerous benefits of popular culture for language learning, including access to authentic linguistic input, exposure to diverse language varieties, enhanced learner agency, and opportunities for cultural and identity development (e.g., Pennycook, 2010; Chik, 2015; Duff & Doherty, 2015; Liu & Lin, 2017; Saraceni, 2017; Werner, 2018; Sauro & Thorne, 2020). Frequent exposure to emotionally salient and contextualized language use has also been shown to support second language learning (Dolean, 2016; Pai & Duff, 2020). These discussions are often linked to theories of literacy, multimedia literacy, and multiliteracies. However, much of the existing research focuses on English, particularly in ESL contexts involving immigrant youth or in EFL settings where learners engage with English-language popular culture. Comparatively little attention has been paid to the learning and teaching of languages other than English (LOTE).

Addressing this gap, the panel examines how LOTE learners engage with popular culture in expanded digital environments and how educators might productively intervene. Contributions will include analyses of popular culture texts and platform-based practices, studies of learners’ experiences, identities, and participatory trajectories, and pedagogical initiatives that integrate popular culture as curricular content, instructional resources, or the basis for student-generated projects. Together, the panel advances critical, empirical, and pedagogical conversations about popular culture in post-secondary language education.

Interested speakers are invited to submit abstracts (up to 300 words) outlining their planned presentation alongside a bio (up to 150 words) to Hae-Young Kim (haeyoung@duke.edu) by **March 20, 2026**. Presenters must be MLA members by April 1, 2026 to be included in the convention program.

Session 2: “Re-enchanting Language Learning”

Organized by Sébastien Dubreil (Carnegie Mellon University)
(guaranteed, in-person session)

The MLA Forum on Second-Language Teaching & Learning invites proposals that foreground affirmative, forward-looking stories of second, foreign, and additional language education – approaches or initiatives that resist deficit, crisis-driven, or purely instrumental accounts of language learning and instead emphasize possibility, vitality, agency, and meaning.

In recent years, second language education has often been framed through narratives of decline, utility, or surveillance, often fueled by technological mediation that privileges scale, efficiency, and sometimes the invisibilization of difference, over hospitality or the poetics of human connections. While such accounts may respond to institutional pressures, they risk narrowing our pedagogical imaginations. This session seeks to reclaim language learning as an emancipatory practice: one that fosters agency, ethical relationality, curiosity, pleasure, and a renewed sense of wonder in engaging with languages and cultures. To re-enchant language learning is not to romanticize it, but to reassert its capacity to open futures, cultivate social connection, and support learners in (re-)imagining different horizons.

We welcome proposals that examine pedagogical approaches, curricular designs, classroom practices, community-engaged projects, or theoretical frameworks that articulate hopeful and transformative narratives of language education. Contributions may be empirical, conceptual, or practice-based, and may—but need not—engage with digital or technological contexts. Possible points of focus include (but are not limited to):

- Play, imagination, and creativity as serious pedagogical forces
- Care, affect, joy, and pleasure in language learning
- Narrative, storytelling, and meaning-making in multilingual education
- Ecological, relational, or place-based approaches to language pedagogy
- Decolonial, critical-hope, or reparative perspectives on language teaching
- Classroom practices that sustain learner curiosity, resilience, and agency
- Initiatives in domestic, study-abroad, and community-based contexts

We particularly encourage proposals that connect local teaching practices to broader educational, cultural, or ethical questions, and that help articulate new stories we can tell—about why language learning matters, how it can feel, and what futures it might enable.

Proposals should clearly situate their contribution within second or additional language education and speak to the session’s overarching goal of advancing emancipatory, re-enchanting narratives for the field.

Interested speakers are invited to submit abstracts (up to 300 words) outlining their planned presentation alongside a bio (up to 150 words) to Sébastien Dubreil (sdubreil@andrew.cmu.edu) by **March 20, 2026**. Presenters must be MLA members by April 1, 2026 to be included in the convention program.

Session 3: “Futuring Multilingually: Languages as Lived Emancipatory Processes”

Organized by Janice McGregor (University of Arizona) & Lee Abraham (Columbia University)
(non-guaranteed, virtual session)

Multilingual languagers *do* things with languages in spite of the fact that they have often been framed through deficit viewpoints (as noted by e.g., Poplack, 1980, among others). Early sociolinguistic research was groundbreaking in its legitimization of multilingual languagers through the development of “a typology of codeswitching” (Licata, 2023, p. 3, see also Levine, 2011; 2014) which affirmed that US Spanish languagers in particular could linguistically navigate and move across Spanish and English quite easily. Subsequent sociolinguistic and anthropological publications have aimed to strengthen positive positions of

multilingualism across many institutions and in society at large. Yet, as Rosa & Flores (2017) point out, these contributions have not foiled the ways in which deficit perspectives still plague racialized students in the US.

In this session, we thus invite an exploration of languages as lived emancipatory processes that actively shape languagers' multilingual identities, creative expression, and social transformation. Scholars interested in contributing to this panel might ask how multilingual languagers (e.g., writers, creators, educators, health-care workers, politicians, community members) mobilize languages to resist marginalization, revitalize forgotten and/or invisibilized knowledge and histories, and reconfigure power. What might it mean to future multilingually?

Interested speakers are invited to submit abstracts (up to 300 words) outlining their planned presentation alongside a bio (up to 150 words) to Janice McGregor (jmcgregor@arizona.edu) and/or Lee Abraham (lba2133@columbia.edu) by **March 20, 2026**. This **virtual** session is a **non-guaranteed session** sponsored by the MLA Second Language Learning and Teaching (SLTL) Forum. Presenters must be MLA members by April 1, 2026 to be included in the convention program.

Levine, G. S. (2011). *Code choice in the language classroom*. Multilingual Matters.

Levine, G. S. (2014). Principles for code choice in the foreign language classroom: A focus on grammaring. *Language Teaching*, 47(3), 332–348. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444811000498>

Licata, G. (2023). Indexing deficiency: Connecting language learning and teaching to evaluations of US Spanish. *Languages*, 8(3), 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.3390/languages8030204>

Poplack, S. (1980). Sometimes I'll start a sentence in Spanish y termino en Español: Toward a typology of code-switching. *Linguistics*, 18, 581–618.

Rosa, J., & Flores, N. (2017). Unsettling race and language: Toward a raciolinguistic perspective. *Language in Society*, 46(5), 621–647. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047404517000562>

Session 4: “Sustainable Practitioner Research in Language Education”

Organized by Cori Crane (University of Alabama) & Mandy Menke (University of Minnesota)
(non-guaranteed, in-person, collaborative session between the SLTL Forum & the AAUSC)

Practitioner research offers language teachers a productive way to develop deeper understanding about their pedagogical practices and learners' experiences (Allwright & Hanks, 2009; Burns, 1999; Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). Representing “systematic, intentional study of one's own professional practice” (Golombek, 2024), practitioner research—such as action research, exploratory practice, narrative inquiry, lesson study, among others—empowers teachers to theorize their instructional practice as well as explore new educational theories. As such, it has the potential to break down traditional barriers between research and practice, including researchers and practitioners, and teachers and learners. Within language programs, practitioners who study teaching and learning in their classrooms can provide important feedback on instructional practice (e.g., materials, pedagogies, and assessments), curricular and programmatic policies, and—importantly—language learners and their development.

Despite growing interest in and understanding of the powerful potential that practitioner research offers language educators and language programs, the challenge of sustainability persists (Edwards & Burns, 2024; Slimani-Rolls et al., 2025; Slimani-Rolls & Kiely, 2018). What conditions foster (and constrain) meaningful, continuous research among language educators? What can a sustainable research practice look like in higher education, and what role(s) do language programs and departments, in particular, play in supporting teacher inquiry? This session welcomes position papers, reports, and empirical research that engage with these questions and invites language educators, especially language program administrators and teacher educators invested in programmatic efforts to promote sustainable practitioner research.

Interested speakers are invited to submit abstracts (up to 300 words) outlining their planned presentation alongside a bio (up to 150 words) to Cori Crane (cpcrane@ua.edu) by **March 20, 2026**. This in-person session is sponsored by the MLA Second Language Learning and Teaching (SLTL) Forum and the American Association of University Supervisors & Coordinators (AAUSC). Presenters must be MLA members by April 1, 2026 to be included in the convention program.

Allwright, D., & Hanks, J. (2009). *The developing language learner: An introduction to Exploratory Practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Burns, A. (1999). *Collaborative action research for English language teachers*. Cambridge University Press.

Edwards, E., & Burns, A. (2024). Inclusivity and sustainability in language practitioner researcher development: A sociocultural ecological framework. *Language Teaching Research*, 29(8), 3237-3257.

Golombek, P. (2024). Reimagining criteria and the review process for practitioner research. Unpublished conference presentation, *12th International Language Teacher Education Conference*, Minneapolis, MN.

Kemmis, S., & McTaggart, R. (2003). Participatory action research. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 336–396). Sage.

Slimani-Rolls, A., Crane, C., Hanks, J., & Miller, I. (2025). Introduction to the special issue: Challenges and practices to advance sustainable and inclusive practitioner research. *Language Teaching Research*, 29(8), 3222–3236.

Slimani-Rolls, A., & Kiely, R. (Eds.). (2019). *Exploratory practice for continuing professional development. An innovative approach for language teachers*. Palgrave Macmillan.