Making Connections: From the Classroom to the World Beyond

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2004 Report of the
Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages

Making Connections: From the Classroom to the World Beyond Di Donato & Humbach, Editors

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Selected Papers from the 2004 Central States Conference

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Review and Acceptance Procedures Central States Conference *Report*

The Central States Conference *Report* is a refereed volume of selected papers from the annual Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. Abstracts for sessions are first submitted to the Program Chair, who then selects the sessions that will be presented at the annual conference. Once the sessions have been selected, presenters are contacted by the editor of the CSC *Report* and invited to submit a manuscript for possible publication in that volume. Copies of the publication guidelines are sent to presenters who express interest in submitting a manuscript based on their presentation. Manuscripts that are submitted are read and evaluated by at least five members of the Editorial Board, individuals who are experts in the field of second language acquisition and foreign language methodology. Reviewers are asked to recommend that the manuscript (1) be published in its current form, (2) be published after particular revisions have been made, or (3) not be published. The editors make all final publishing decisions. The names and affiliations of the members of the 2004 Editorial Board are listed below.

The editors would like to point out that all website addresses (URLs) mentioned in the articles were fully functional at the time this volume went to press. This does not mean that those sites still exist or that the addresses given are still functional.

2004 CSC *Report* Editorial Board

CSC Board of Directors
2003-04

Introduction

Making Connections: From the Classroom to the World Beyond

Editors

Robert Di Donato
Nancy A. Humbach
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This volume is based on the presentations of the Central States Conference superbly organized by Anne G. Nerenz, program chair, Geneviève Peden, assistant program chair and Marge Mandl, local arrangements chair. The title, *Making Connections: From the Classroom to the World Beyond*, underscores one of the basic principles of language teaching echoed in the ACTFL *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century*. Teachers are constantly making connections in their language classes: to their students, to the curriculum, to other cultures, to teaching practices, to other disciplines, and to the global community. These connections are based on an infrastructure of language teaching and learning that involves research, theory, classroom practice, activities, and events. Over the past fifty years the profession has undergone enormous changes brought about by new research in second language acquisition as well as new directions in language teaching and learning. Once isolated from other disciplines, world languages now reaches out to them and incorporates them into the curriculum and into daily classroom activities. Furthermore, e-mail and the internet have added vast new dimensions to our language teaching repertoire, enabling us to reach out to the global community in ways we were unable to previously.

The articles in this volume reflect and elaborate on the concept of making connections. The first group of articles addresses the infrastructure of language teaching and learning by concentrating on programmatic issues. Carduner's article suggests strategies for advising language majors and minors that engage them in long-term course planning, career planning, and professional development activities. He advocates fostering critical thinking and decision-making skills as well as information gathering efforts to ensure students' academic and professional success. Van Houten describes the European Language Portfolio (ELP), a universal system of scaling and recording language learning that increases learner autonomy and bridges successfully to the workplace. Her discussion explores the application of the ELP to the American context. Scow and Trayer present a three-phase initiative incorporating the ELP to meet the needs of PreK-16 students (based on a Nebraska model). This initiative contains measures to ensure that all students are properly instructed on a continual basis in order to prepare them for the challenges of the college and work.

The second group of articles expands the teaching-learning infrastructure by addressing research issues in second language acquisition. Gascoigne examines the role of gender interaction and discusses the effects of pedagogical environments on gender-specific discursive patterns. Redouane explores input enhancement as a way of promoting learners' comprehension and attention to linguistic forms and presents empirical evidence to support the effectiveness of written input enhancement and text length on comprehension. Olivares-Cuhat, Gunawardena, and Hall focus on minority students in their analysis of learning styles and strategy preferences. They suggest techniques for improving students' reading comprehension by matching literacy assignments to literacy learning style preferences. And Vrooman advances the argument that it is important to couple higher order thinking skills with the development of superior-level proficiency. He calls for cognitively challenging course work that will lead to superior level language abilities.

The next group of articles contributes to the teaching-learning infrastructure by focusing on connecting to classroom materials. Moffit argues for the inclusion of picture books in the world language curriculum so that students may study cultural similarities and differences. By doing so, they extract underlying values and beliefs of the target country from them. And McNee calls for involving students in the preparation and performance of legends in order to motivate them in language learning. She outlines a step-by-step approach with accompanying activities and ideas.

And the last group of articles enhances the teaching-learning infrastructure by again concentrating on the classroom, this time targeting strategies and techniques. Sildus outlines a variety of activities designed to enhance learning and make it more meaningful through personal connections to students' previous knowledge, age, interests, and curiosity. Koubek presents the results of a study in first year Czech in which electronic communication bridges the classroom and the Czech community at large. She analyzes the effect of this project on reading comprehension, writing strategies, the promotion of cross-cultural understanding, and student motivation.

Each of these papers adds to or reflects a dimension of the multi-faceted infrastructure of language teaching and learning. They suggest new strategies and techniques for world language programs as well as for the classroom. They call for new directions in research into learning in general and how it applies specifically to the language classroom. Making connections from the classroom to the world beyond is indispensable to us as language teachers, whether it be by innovating program practices, advancing research, incorporating new materials into the classroom, or developing teaching strategies. It is only through making connections to the classroom and the world beyond that we provide our students with the very best language learning experience possible.

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Advising Foreign Language Majors and Minors: Strategies and Resources

Jessie Carduner
Kent State University

Academic advising has been shown to be a critical factor in student success and satisfaction with the institution (Dillon & Fisher, 2000). Since most faculty are expected to advise (Habley & Morales, 1998), they are key players in the retention process. Yet, as researchers have repeatedly pointed out, conditions for faculty advisors are less than ideal. High caseloads, minimal training, and lack of reward or recognition are frequently cited impediments to quality advising (e.g., Dillon & Fisher; Gordon, 1994; Habley & Morales; Pardee, 1994). While calls for reform abound, most of the literature is directed towards administrators and advising coordinators. With the exception of materials produced by the National Academic Advising Association (e.g., *The NACADA faculty advising training video*, 1996), very little has been published specifically for faculty in the way of hands-on strategies for turning principles of developmental advising, the "elusive ideal" (Gordon, 1994), into everyday practice. Discipline-specific resources are especially scarce. In this paper I will address this gap with concrete suggestions for foreign language (FL) faculty advisors.

General characteristics and practices of effective advisors

Since the publication of Crookston's (1972) seminal article on developmental advising, researchers have generally agreed that academic advising entails much more than simply assisting students with registration procedures and evaluating their progress towards graduation. Developmental advisors adapt their strategies to accommodate student growth (NACADA, 1996; Creamer, 2000) and should contribute to that growth by helping students develop career and life goals (e.g., McCollum, 1998; McCalla-Wriggins, 2000) and by encouraging the use of critical-thinking, evaluation- and decision-making skills (e.g., Kramer, 2000; Kramer, Taylor, Chynoweth & Jensen, 1987). Expectations for advisors comprise a complex maze of philosophical attitudes, informational knowledge, interpersonal and communication skills, and prescribed procedures for advisor-advisee interactions that have been gleaned from documents such as NACADA's *Statement of Core Values* (NACADA, 1994) and the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education's *Academic Advising Standards and Guidelines* (Miller, 1997), as well as from assessments of advisor performance (e.g., Habley, 1994) and recommendations for training advisors (e.g., Burton et al.,1996; Higginson, 2000). When considered together, the list can be overwhelming (Higginson), even for experienced full-time professional advisors. Fortunately, as Ryan (1992) has proposed, faculty can transfer many of their teaching skills and techniques to the advising context.

Ryan compared literature on effective teaching and academic advising published between 1975 and 1990 to determine the characteristics of effective teachers and to explore possible relationships between good teaching and advising practices. She found that for both teaching and advising, knowledge of subject matter and faculty preparedness are highly desirable qualities. In the case of advising, 'content knowledge' includes a comprehensive understanding of departmental requirements and policies and a general familiarity with institutional policies. Advisors should have a good sense of the institution's mission and goals and be able to convey this information to students. Effective advisors are knowledgeable about career and educational opportunities in the student's chosen field. Then, just as faculty prepare lesson plans for classroom teaching, they must also prepare for advising appointments. This involves being proactive in initiating contact, keeping and reviewing advising notes for each advisee, and scheduling appointments carefully so that there is adequate, uninterrupted time for the student (Nutt, 2000).

Along with content knowledge and preparation, a positive attitude is essential for both teaching and advising (Ryan, 1992). Teachers and advisors alike should show enthusiasm for the subject matter or task, serve as role models, and show students respect. The literature also suggests that for both roles, good interpersonal and communication skills, including questioning techniques, listening skills, and appropriate use of body language are necessary. For example, advisors should use a combination of open-ended and closed questions when interviewing students (Nutt, 2000). Advisors should refrain from interrupting advisees, but at the same time demonstrate that they are listening through back-channel feedback (e.g., nodding or saying, "I see" or "yes"), confirmation checks, and requests for clarification or more information (Burton et al., 1996; Nutt). Additionally, advisors should be attuned to students' nonverbal messages (Burton, et al.; Nutt).

Referral skills are often mentioned in close association with interpersonal skills (Burton et al., 1996; Nutt, 2000; Ryan, 1992). A student's need for guidance to available programs and services should not be underestimated, as students who work off campus may not have time to explore campus resources on their own (Smerglia & Bouchet, 1999). Referrals are most effective when advisors explain clearly and in an open manner why the student should obtain assistance from another unit (Nutt, 2000, p. 223). When making a referral, the advisor should provide the student with complete contact information and be willing to assist the student in making a phone call or, in some cases, be willing to walk with the student to another office (p. 223). It also helpful to give to students campus maps and brochures from the various offices that offer student services. Conscientious advisors follow up on referrals, as failure to do so may lead a student to believe the referral was unimportant or that the advisor is not interested in the advisee's progress (Nutt, 2000, p. 223). Advisors may do this by phone, e-mail, or in person, simply by asking the student about the results of a referral. Sometimes students report that people in the office to which they have been referred were "not helpful." I have found that the likelihood of a successful referral can be increased by reviewing with students potential questions to ask and forms to request. When possible, advisors should show students what a needed form looks like so that the student can pick up the correct one on the first visit to another office.

Advising sessions

Having discussed general characteristics and procedures for effective advising, I now turn to specific practices that may be used in individual advising sessions at various stages in a student's development from the time he or she is assigned to a faculty advisor to the first post-undergraduate years. Sequenced practices for faculty advisors can be culled from Kramer's (2000) taxonomy of advising services by academic class (an updated version of Kramer, Taylor Chynoweth, & Jensen's 1987 article) and will serve as a foundation for the majority of strategies presented here. The reader should keep in mind, however, that the suggestions that follow are intended to represent typical needs of students at each academic level. In actual practice, adjustments need to be made to match students' individual situations. Furthermore, although the practices are presented here as a developmental sequence, the process is more recursive than linear. Topics introduced in initial advising sessions are revisited in later sessions.

In the most common models of advising (see e.g., Habley & Morales, 1998), *faculty-only*, *split* (advising is shared between faculty and a central advising office), and *supplementary* (faculty advise but there is a central office that guides faculty and provides referral services), individual faculty become the primary advisor for a student once the student has declared a major.

Although the point at which a student declares a major varies, typically, students commit to a program (after sometimes changing their plans) late in the freshman year or during the sophomore year. Thus, I will start with recommendations for this level and assume that prior to the sophomore year, advising is the primary responsibility of either a collegial office or a unit in charge of new student orientation. (For information on student needs and advising services for pre-majors and first-year students, see e.g., Kramer 2000).

Suggestions for the sophomore year

It is in the sophomore year that students begin to "crystallize academic plans" (Kramer, 2000, p. 91). In this stage, with the advisor's assistance, students should start to understand what is expected of them academically, both in general and within their major; they should begin exploring career opportunities; and they should investigate their possibilities for financial assistance (Kramer). During the first few advising sessions, faculty will want to lay the foundations for student retention or, when appropriate, help the student make a timely decision to pursue a different major. Faculty should be aware of common reasons for changing a program of study and address these variables, which include lack of information, outside pressures, academic difficulty, and a student's level of maturity (Steele & McDonald, 2000, p.150), before these issues become problematic for the student. Mandatory advising with fixed advisor-advisee dyads coupled with long-term program planning can be very effective in this regard.

In long-term planning models, during the first advising appointment, advisor and advisee draw up an anticipated, but not completely inalterable, semester-by-semester prospectus. (A reproduction of the template we use in our department is included in Appendix A.) There are many advantages to this approach. First, students get a better sense of their program as an integrated whole. Long-term planning helps raise students' awareness of prerequisites and rotations for course offerings, enabling them to see immediate consequences of making a change to their schedule (i.e., what would happen if they dropped a class). Students can anticipate their graduation date and easily determine whether adding a minor or another major might delay their graduation. Moreover, a long-term course plan can help students and faculty determine the point at which study abroad or an internship might be most productive. Finally, when detailed course planning is done in an initial advising session, faculty and students will have more time to engage in developmental advising in future sessions, as less time will be needed to discuss scheduling matters.

In addition to long-term course planning, advisors can plant the seeds for developmental advising in the first few advising appointments by encouraging the student to discuss reasons for choosing a language major. Although the relationship between the student's program of study and potential career paths will be explored more fully in the junior- and senior years, the process can be initiated much sooner. Students entering college may have limited knowledge of existing careers (Steele & McDonald, 2000) and they may not realize that a career in FLs need not be limited to teaching and translation. Faculty can raise advisees' awareness of other options by sharing their own knowledge about careers in languages, by recommending titles such as *Careers in foreign languages* (Camenson, 2001) and *Great jobs for foreign language majors* (DeGalan & Lambert, 2001), by encouraging students to visit the campus career services center, and finally, by arranging to have students talk to professionals who use FL skills in their jobs.

Knowledge about potential career paths in languages puts students in a better position to decide whether they have made an appropriate choice of major and can better prepare them to discuss their plans with family and friends. Faculty can tie discussion of career potential to various options that a student may have within a language program. For example, our department offers specializations in three tracks, pedagogy, translation, and literature/culture. Although a decision need not be made immediately, career interests will ultimately influence a student's course selections and choice of track. Moreover, it can be beneficial for students to think about minors and certificate programs to complement their language degree early on in their studies so that they have enough time to take the required courses.

Kramer (2000) indicates that exploring avenues for financial assistance with students is another advising function that should be practiced during the first few years of a student's college experience. While students can certainly be referred to the campus financial aid office, faculty often have knowledge of scholarships specifically designated for students in their disciplines. For example, our state FL association offers study-abroad scholarships for pre-service teachers; the American Foundation for Translation and Interpretation (www.afti.org) offers scholarships for students in technical or scientific translation programs and interpreter training programs; and many FL language honorary societies offer scholarships for student members. Staff in financial aid offices may not be fully aware of these discipline-specific scholarship opportunities. Additionally, some scholarships require that the student be nominated or supported by a faculty's recommendation. Thus, faculty can play a big role in helping a student procure a scholarship, which will not only help the student financially, but also in building a strong résumé. Faculty and advisees can explore private scholarship opportunities on the Internet as well as in bound volumes such as *The Scholarship Book 2002* (Cassidy, 2001) and *Kaplan Scholarships 2002* (Schlachter & Weber, 2001).

In addition to helping an advisee plan course work and explore career possibilities and scholarship opportunities, during the first advising interviews, faculty should encourage students to seek academic and social support on campus. Faculty advisors can recommend clubs and organizations and make students aware of any department-sponsored activities that might be of interest or help to them. For instance, our advisees are encouraged to take advantage of free grammar and conversation tutoring services and to attend weekly target-language coffee hours sponsored by our department.

Peer mentoring can serve as an alternative to or as supplement to campus-based organizations and events. Faculty can introduce advisees to each other, making a special effort to ensure that newer students meet experienced fellow language majors who "know the ropes" and can offer advice and support. I have found this to be an especially effective tactic for retaining transfer students and students who come from our smaller, regional campuses. Another strategy advisors can use to connect advisees is to create a listserv or electronic bulletin board to which announcements, news, and general advising questions and information of a non-personal nature can be posted by both advisors and advisees.

During advising sessions subsequent to the initial one, faculty will want to monitor students' academic progress, making adjustments to the long-term course plan as necessary and helping students who need assistance with study skills and time management strategies. A student who had not done well in lower division language courses will not have the linguistic competence to be successful in upper division classes. If the situation is so extreme that the advisor and advisee decide it is in the advisee's best interest not to continue with language study, the advisor should be supportive in helping the student explore other alternatives. In other cases, improving performance may merely be a matter of the student's changing some study habits, adjusting to expectations for advanced study, or getting extra practice in certain language skills. In this latter situation, faculty and advisee should work together to diagnose the problem and come up with practical solutions. Faculty can suggest avenues for gaining additional language practice (e.g., tutoring, clubs, conversation partners, radio, television, printed media, study abroad). With regard to study skills, faculty can recommend selected chapters from books like *The everything study book* (Frank, 1996) for general advice, or to Rubin and Thompson's (1994) volume, *How to be a more successful language learner*, for more specific applications to language learning. Advisors can also refer students to campus offices that help with study skills, such as academic success centers, writing centers, departmental tutoring, and sometimes to a psychological counseling office that may offer workshops on time and stress management.

Once scheduling and programmatic issues and any academic difficulties have been taken care of, advisors and advisees can begin discussing outside opportunities to develop language or professional skills, such as study abroad programs and internships. While a student may not be linguistically ready, mature enough or confident enough for an internship or study abroad in the sophomore year (some will, however), he or she ought to begin considering the possibilities and start gathering information at this stage since comparing programs, arranging for lodging, organizing one's finances, and discussing one's intentions with relatives will require significant time and effort.

Students often do not know how to get started in finding a suitable program. Faculty can direct students to programs they know of and refer them to associates in other countries or to contacts who work at organizations that offer internships to language students. At the same time, advisors and students can review listings of programs together in books like *The internship bible* (Oldman & Hamadeh, 2003), *Academic Year Abroad 2002* (O'Sullivan, 2002), and *Short-term study abroad 2002* (O'Sullivan, 2002), consult web sites with links to study abroad programs (e.g., Studyabroad.com), and look over any brochures the faculty or student has collected. In fact, faculty may assign the student the task of gathering literature on applicable programs before coming to the second or third advising appointment. Ryan suggests that assigning investigative tasks to advisees will create a situation in which the advisee makes use of "information-gathering, decision-making and problem-solving skills" (1992, p. 6), which, the reader will recall, are considered goals of developmental advising. If possible, faculty should arrange for advisees to get a peer's perspective by talkig to fellow students who have gone abroad or done internships. As the student and advisor review literature on programs, the student will need to be guided in considering factors such as financial resources, anticipated length of stay, language proficiency, destination preferences, and goals for participating in a program.

If a student commits to a program, faculty may need to help students complete the necessary paperwork such as applications, forms for letters of recommendation, pre-approval for course credits, and so forth. In fact, faculty advisors are often expected to sign off on course approvals. Although most campuses have special offices to handle administrative aspects of study abroad and internships, faculty will want to be familiar with general procedures and names of official forms in order to make appropriate referrals. On occasion, parents may contact faculty advisors to discuss their concerns about sending their child away to study. Faculty will need to be prepared for this and be able to refer parents to knowledgeable staff in the study abroad- or career services office.

Sometimes a student will be unable or unwilling to go abroad or complete an internship. Every student's interests and situation will be unique. Thus, it is important for faculty advisors to find creative ways to engage students with the target language and cultures outside of the classroom. For example, students can be encouraged to volunteer at local organizations that need people with FL skills. Another possibility would be to have advisees serve as a research assistant in the language department. Many institutions have initiatives for involving undergraduates in research, so funding for this may be available. Arrangements may also be made to get students with a solid language background involved in tutoring at the university or at a local school. This latter activity is particularly beneficial for pre-service teachers who need experience or observation hours.

Suggestions for the junior year

Moving on to the junior year, Kramer (2000) suggests that this is the time for students to clarify career goals, become better acquainted with faculty, achieve intellectual competence in their field and confidence in their professional ability, review their status with respect to completion of general- and major requirements, and, if applicable, begin researching graduate schools. It is in this year that post-graduation planning will become more solidly integrated with academic planning. Students need to focus on acquiring the competencies required for particular jobs and graduate programs. In order to make correct choices, such as which track to follow within a major or which courses to take among several options, students need to be familiar with graduate programs and job descriptions in their field. At this point, a student's involvement with the career services office should become more active. Students will want to take advantage of workshops and job fairs. However, advisees should not rely solely on the resources provided by career counselors but should also conduct their own searches in job banks as well as talk to other FL faculty and recent graduates. Advisors can facilitate this by putting advisees in touch with knowledgeable colleagues and recent graduates who have successfully placed into a job and by referring students to reputable job databases.

If an advisee plans to go on to graduate school, investigation into programs should also begin in the junior year so that the student has ample time to research (and fulfill) entrance requirements such as taking the Graduate Record Examination (GRE). Graduate schools typically have minimal grade-point average requirements. Early awareness of this fact may motivate a student to put more effort into earning the required grade points. Moreover, some institutions (as does ours) allow for the possibility of certain course credits being applied simultaneously to a bachelor's and master's program. To take advantage of this opportunity, students have to be pre-approved before registering for the applicable classes, some of which are taken as early as the junior year. Thus, it is never too soon for the student to begin thinking about graduate school.

Advisors and students can explore graduate programs using strategies similar to those for investigating study abroad and internship programs, such as searching relevant web sites (e.g., universities.com; www.petersons.com), consulting books on graduate programs and collecting college and university bulletins or catalogs, and talking with faculty and recent graduates. Faculty should raise advisees' awareness of possibilities for funding graduate study, urging students to give special consideration to institutions that offer fellowships and assistantships, which not only often provide stipends and tuition remission, but enable students to gain work experience in their field.

Another productive advising activity for the junior year is to involve advisees in the activities of professional FL associations and regional alliances. When foreign language conferences are held within driving distance, faculty advisors can arrange for advisees to attend the conference or even co-present with them. Professional development opportunities such as this give students a broader perspective of the discipline, may positively reinforce their choice of major, and, if the student presents, may increase his or her employability or eligibility for scholarships. Preparing for a conference together can help students and faculty bond and gives faculty a chance to observe an advisee's sense of responsibility, organizational skills, and public presence. This, in turn, arms the faculty with positive information about the student that can be included in letters of recommendation in the future.

Suggestions for the senior year

The senior year, in Kramer's (2000) model, focuses on preparation for employment, graduate school or other professional opportunities, and making the application for graduation. Students who plan to get a job soon after graduation will need to begin their job search, create or polish their résumé, develop interviewing skills, and participate in on-campus recruiting opportunities. Career services centers generally assist students with all of these activities. However, faculty can keep a watchful eye on their advisees' progress and also provide discipline-specific advice. In the case of students who intend to go on to graduate school, faculty can help them with the application process and give them counsel in narrowing down their choices. If the schools are nearby, advisees should be encouraged to visit the campuses and meet the faculty there.

Whether the student chooses to go on to graduate school or begin searching for a job, he or she will need letters of recommendation. Faculty should discuss with the student the procedures for obtaining letters, including how to choose appropriate letter writers, how to request a recommendation letter, and what it means to waive one's rights to see a recommendation. Moreover, students should be reminded to be courteous when making a request and to give the person writing the letter enough information and time. If the career services center has a portfolio service, advisors should recommend that their students take advantage of it. This service enables a student to store all standard application documentation in a single file that for a fee, can be sent to prospective schools and employers, saving the student from having to make multiple requests for recommendations from the same faculty member.

At the same time that they are making decisions about graduate school or finding a job, students will have to deal with their application for graduation. Faculty advisors should make sure their advisees understand and comply with procedures, one of the most important of which is completing a degree audit. Students should check their standing early in the senior year so that there are no surprises during the last semester. In this technological age, many of these procedures may have been automated, and students may be able to access their own degree audit online. Nevertheless, faculty advisors should be available to oversee the student's application or refer the students to the appropriate person if the application is handled by another office.

Kramer et al. note that one of the advising services to be provided in the senior year is to ensure that "students are appropriately recognized during commencement with diplomas or other honors" (1987, p.29). Recognition awards and memberships in honor societies look good on a student's résumé, increasing his or her chances of being accepted into graduate school and for employment. Faculty advisors will get to know their advisees quite well over time and are in a good position to nominate deserving students for departmental, institutional, and national honors and should, therefore, make a strong effort to keep informed about such awards.

Suggestions for the post-undergraduate years

Although the advisee is technically no longer a faculty member's responsibility after graduation, it is good practice to stay in touch with former advisees. First, the initial years after graduation will be transitional and the former advisee may need some support and encouragement. Second, recent graduates can be a rich source of information and advice for current students. Third, many departments have to report on the quality of their programs. By keeping in touch with graduated students, faculty will have access to information (i.e., job and graduate school placements) that documents their success in preparing students for the future.

Collecting resources for advising

The practices described above require the use of several advising resources (for a summary, see Appendix B), many of which have already been mentioned. This section focuses on some additional resources and presents tips for acquiring advising materials. The five types of resources advisors will use most are descriptions of academic policies and procedures, information for making referrals, materials for developmental advising (e.g., lists of scholarships, graduate programs, etc.), materials to help students with study skills, and professional development resources for faculty advisors. While much of the initial gathering of resources should be deliberate (for example, advisors need immediate access to information about academic policies), other materials can be acquired over time as advisors expand their repertoire of services.

With regard to academic policies and procedures, the most useful tool is the university bulletin or catalog. Advisors should keep back issues in their office because students are generally accountable to the catalog effective when they began their studies, and many university web sites contain only the most recent versions. As already suggested above, it is a good idea to have sample copies of important official forms as well. These can be collected by visiting the offices that generate them (e.g., the collegial advising office, the Registrar). While many forms may be available online, visiting the offices that handle the forms is a better alternative because the advisor can use the opportunity to network (face-to-face) with key personnel and to collect useful brochures and pamphlets from waiting areas. The same is true for gathering the second set of essential advisor resources: information for making referrals.

The third category, "materials for developmental advising," are those used to help students explore opportunities in languages and engage in planning for the future (e.g., *Careers in foreign languages*, Camenson, 2001). The materials for developmental advising can be quite costly. Advisors need only keep a representative sample in their office so that they can familiarize students with the types of resources that are available. Slightly older editions of books on scholarships, internships, financial aid, and so forth, can often be found for a lesser cost at library book sales and remainder tables. If the student finds the books useful, he or she may then consult more recent editions, that can often be found in the university and local public libraries and in most campus bookstores.

With regard to the fourth category of materials, resources to help students with their academic performance, I have already mentioned titles such as *The everything study book* (Frank, 1996) and *How to be a more successful language learner* (Rubin & Thompson, 1994). Faculty may also want to keep a lending library of language dictionaries, reference grammars, and style manuals in their office. These materials are expensive and students may not be able to purchase their own copies or check them out of the library to use at home (as they are often non-circulating) when they are writing term papers or preparing for an exam. Advisors, of course, will want to keep track of the materials they lend, so that their collection does not become depleted.

The final set of resources relate to professional development in one's advising capacity. A good place to start is with any advising support materials available through one's own institution, although these may be limited, as data from the Fifth National Survey on Academic Advising indicate that a large percent of institutions do not even have a written policy on advising (Habley & Morales, 1998). Two resources at my institution that I have found very useful are a faculty advisor's manual and membership in our university's Academic Support and Advising Association. Faculty should investigate whether similar resources are accessible on their campus. A faculty advisor manual can be a one-stop source for many advising questions related to an institution's policies, practices, and advising structure, available support services for students, and philosophies and theories of advising. A campus advising association will provide similar information but also organizes forums for faculty and professional advisors to connect with each other and may sponsor workshops and conferences for professional development. Under conditions such as those described in the introduction (i.e., when training, support, and recognition for advising are minimal), the informational- and emotional support provided by an advising association can be invaluable. Therefore, faculty advisors should give consideration to joining not only their campus advising association if there is one, but also the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA).

NACADA supports advising through publications, grants, conferences, advising awards, clearinghouses, forums, and connections to other advising organizations. Its training video for faculty advisors (NACADA, 1996) explores the concept of developmental advising through role-play scenarios, commentary, discussion questions, and pointers for using interpersonal skills in advising. While not a substitute for live workshops, the video and the Facilitator's Manual (Burton, et al., 1996) offer lots of hands-on strategies for faculty advisors. NACADA was also involved in the publication of a recent volume, A*cademic advising: A comprehensive handbook* (Gordon, Habley, et al., 2000), which is a collection of essays about different aspects of advising such as advising students with special needs, using technological resources in advising, advisor training and recognition, theories of advising, and so forth. It highlights the topics of major interest to the advising profession, which brings us to our final point, the need for faculty advisors to contribute to the research on advising.

Making advising accomplishments public

As suggested in the introduction, there are relatively few publications that offer strategies for faculty advisors. The majority of research related to faculty advising is directed toward advising coordinators and administrators, rather than to the faculty themselves. Dillon and Fisher (2000) and Smerglia and Bouchet (1999) have noted that faculty viewpoints on advising have been markedly absent in the literature. Furthermore, there is an apparent schism between professional and faculty advisors (Habley, 1994). McGillan (2000) suggests that discipline-based research in advising may reduce that schism and strengthen critical links between professional- and faculty advisors. By sharing their insights and experiences, faculty can make a significant contribution to the field of advising in higher education.

As faculty develop their advising skills, they should give thought to presenting at local and national advising conferences as well as submit manuscripts to journals concerned with advising, student services, and student development, such as the *NACADA Journal, The Journal of College Teaching Personnel, the Journal of College Student Development*, and so forth. As a special form of teaching (e.g., Craemer, 2000; Crooskston, 1972; Ryan, 1992), advising should also have a place in publications related to FL pedagogy. While there is ample literature on classroom pedagogy, less is known about the influence foreign language faculty advisors can have on students' academic and professional success outside of the classroom. Foreign language faculty advisors should share their advising expertise so that FL faculty can learn more about helping students outside of class. Moreover, by making public their advising accomplishments, faculty can increase the likelihood that their institution will recognize and reward their advising efforts and become more attuned to their needs as advisors.

Conclusions

Most FL faculty are expected to advise, yet very often receive little training (particularly discipline-specific training) for performing a service that is critical in ensuring students' academic and professional success. It was my hope to address this gap by introducing the tenets of developmental advising espoused in the literature and by providing concrete strategies for practicing this type of advising. I hope as well that I have convinced FL faculty to take steps to foster their own growth as advisors by joining associations like NACADA, which provide many resources for faculty advisors. Finally, I encourage FL faculty to disseminate their knowledge about advising to the community of language teachers, as there is a definite need for it.

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Appendix A

Appendix B
Suggested Resources for Advisors

1. Information on academic policies

A. Undergraduate catalogues (bookmark frequently accessed pages, e.g., course requirements, advanced placement, freshman forgiveness, transfer credits.)

B. University Forms (e.g., Change of Program Form, Course Substitution Form, Graduation Application, Program Requirement Sheets)

2. Brochures, forms, and contact information for making referrals

A. Academic Computing Services

B. Academic Skills Center

C. Academic Testing Center
D. Campus Life Director's Office and the Commuter and OffCampus Student Organization

E. Campus map
F. Career Services Center
G. Center for International and Comparative Programs (study abroad office)
H. Collegial advising offices (e.g., Arts and Sciences, College of Education)
I. Counseling and Human Development Center
J. Disabled Student Services Office
K. Financial Aid Office
L. Library (often to Humanities and Education Librarians)
M. University Health Services and Student Wellness Center
N. Writing Skills Center

3. Materials for developmental advising

A. Books about careers in foreign languages
B. Books, brochures, and web sites about graduate programs
C. Books, brochures and web sites about internships, scholarships, and study abroad
D Copies of recent issues of academic journals published by language associations
E. Information booklets for standardized exams (e.g., G.R.E; Praxis I, II.)
F. Programs from recent foreign language conferences
G. Supplies for new teachers (e.g., catalogs from publishers of FL texts and materials, sample high school textbooks, magazines, pictures, teacher's activities books)

4. Materials for helping students with academic performance

A. Style manuals for preparing academic papers
B. Various foreign language dictionaries and reference grammars
C. Books, pamphlets, and handouts about developing study skills and writing skills

5. Professional Development Resources for Faculty Advisors

A. *Academic Advising: A Comprehensive Handbook* (Gordon, Habley et al, 2000)
B. Institution's advising handbook and web site for faculty advisors
C. *NACADA Faculty Advisor Training Video* (NACADA, 1996) and Facilitator's Manual (Burton, et al., 1996).
D. NACADA Web Site (www.ksu.edu/nacada)

2
A Look at the European Language Portfolio and Its Implications for Use in the US

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During the past ten years the Council of Europe has taken major steps to provide a universal system of scaling and recording language learning that increases learner autonomy and bridges effectively to the workplace. The European Language Portfolio (ELP) is a unique instrument, used not to assess, but to document learning and motivate the learner. While American educational needs and attitudes differ vastly from those in Europe, adapting the ELP could add a new dimension and change how Americans view language learning. This article will describe the Council of Europe's recent work with language curriculum, explain the components of the ELP, and discuss adapting the ELP to the American language-learning context.

Background

In October 2002, the Goethe Institut Inter Nationes invited twelve representatives from the National Council for State Supervisors of Foreign Languages (NCSSFL) to Düsseldorf, Germany, for a seminar on Foreign Language Education in Germany and Europe. Participants were struck by the impressive work done around language learning by the Council of Europe, particularly the European Language Portfolio.
Four months after the seminar, the Kentucky Department of Education hosted a meeting with Frank Heyworth, secretary general of the European Association of Quality Language Services (EAQUALS), to discuss how NCSSFL might adapt the European Language Portfolio to meet American students' needs. As a result, schools in Kentucky, South Carolina, Virginia, and Nebraska are piloting a Portfolio program during the 2003-2004 school year.

Change in European language learning

Europeans have always placed a higher value on knowing foreign languages than Americans. Until recently, however, learning a language was an end in itself and utility a non-issue (Delamotte, 1995). Realizing a critical sense of urgency to prepare students for a changing political, economic, and social scene propelled the Council of Europe to focus more intentionally on language learning.

The reality of a European Union necessitated plurilingualism. Schools needed to prepare students for a society of high personal mobility, increasing multicultural diversity, technological and economic globalization, and the dominance of English as the *lingua franca*. In the area of language learning, this would necessitate placing a priority on developing productive oral communication skills.

Equally important in educational reforms was the inclusion of interculturality. This is defined as the mutual enrichment of different coexisting cultures (Porcher, 1995). The belief was that if individuals were to function productively in a multicultural society, they would need to learn to value knowing and experiencing their own and others' cultures and their languages.

The Council of Europe, which has promoted languages since the 1950s, responded to these needs to prepare a plurilingual and plurircultural European citizenry. They were, in fact, charged by the participants of an Intergovernmental Symposium held in 1991, in Rüschlikon, Switzerland, to develop a common European framework of reference for language learning, teaching, and assessment of all kinds and at all levels.

The Common European Framework

Launched in 2001 in the Year of Languages, the Common European Framework (CEF) is a practical document based on scientific research *(Council of Europe 2001: A Common European framework of reference for languages: learning, teaching, assessment*, 2001). It is a holistic description of learning languages, aimed at encouraging learners to reflect on how we communicate, what enables us to do so, how much language we need to know for certain purposes, and how we set objectives and mark progress along the way.

The CEF provides a coherent description of the process of learning and teaching languages. It describes competencies, strategies, tasks, the diversification of the curriculum, and assessment. The Common Scale of Reference and the European Language Portfolio (ELP) provide a tool for comparison and a means for demonstration of knowledge levels and skills.

The fact that the CEF is comprehensive, non-prescriptive and transparent in nature allows for its use by a wide variety of groups (Bailly, et al, 2002). Teachers can use it for curriculum development, course design, and assessment purposes. Because of its learner focus, students develop the ability to identify their levels of competence and become more aware of and responsible for their language learning process. Because of the inclusion of a Common Scale of Reference, institutions can use it as a calibrating instrument to equate skills and knowledge with hiring qualifications. Thus in evaluating candidates for a job, prospective employers have an immediate understanding of the candidates' languages skills and intercultural experiences. Teacher trainers and textbook writers are also appropriate audiences.

Common Scale of Reference

The Common Scale of Reference is at the heart of the CEF and a key to universal acceptance of the ELP (*Council of Europe 2001: A Common European framework of reference for languages: learning, teaching, assessment*, 2001). One of the goals of the CEF was to help partners describe proficiency levels required by a myriad of institutional standards and examinations. The Common Scale of Reference provides common standards for comparison of achievement and progress of language learning.

As all ages and levels of learners are addressed, the Scale of Reference is learner-relevant and general in nature. Its use facilitates comparison between different systems of qualification, for example between school levels, between universities in different countries, or from school to work. The Common Scale of Reference describes in terms of a Global Scale what the learner can do at 6 levels of proficiency and competence (see Appendix A).

Inherent in principles of the Common Scale of Reference is the idea that all language competence is partial. The levels are not to be viewed as steppingstones on a path toward proficiency, but rather each valued in and of itself. For example, someone at the A1 level could travel quite comfortably at the survival level. Someone at the C2 level, on the other hand, would be able to give a public presentation or to study content in the language. In Europe where people learn multiple languages, different individuals might have a variety of objectives for the languages they want to learn. To show progress over short periods of time, schools have further subdivided the levels. The Swiss education system, for example, has six levels used for compulsory schooling up to the age of 16.

Descriptors in the Global Scale possess common characteristics. Each is expressed from a positive point of view. They are all written in a standard sequence, ranging from reception to production to interaction to mediation. The scale can be reduced to three levels, representative of Basic, Intermediate, and Advanced levels, or expanded to twelve. Reworded in first person, they can be used effectively for self-assessment.

The scale has been adopted for use by the Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE) (EAQUALS-ALTE European Language Portfolio, www.eaquals.org/Portfolio_Web_Final.htm). Members of this association include the Cervantes Institute, Goethe-Instut Inter Nationes, Alliance Française, Centre International d'Etudes Pédagogiques (CIEP), and the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES).

While the Global Scale can be compared to ACTFL's Proficiency Guidelines' Generic Descriptions (*ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines, 1986*) and the Common Scale of Reference descriptors closely parallels the ACTFL Proficiency

Guidelines (*ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines—Speaking*, 1999). Reflecting Europeans' greater openness to language learning, the A1 level begins at a higher level of learner expectation than that of ACTFL's Novice Low. Inherent in the ELP perspective is the idea that each level is sufficient in itself in relation to the learner's objectives, whereas the *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines* seem to view the beginning levels as incomplete. Though not as obvious in recent revisions, the ACTFL document implies a comparison to and interaction with native speakers, most obviously in the *ACTFL Performance Guidelines* section on Comprehensibility (1986). The ELP focuses strictly on the learners' capacity to understand, speak and write and does not address how they are understood by native speakers.

The European Language Portfolio

Developed to reflect the principles of the Common European Framework, the European Language Portfolio (ELP) also debuted in 2001. Fifteen member states of the Council of Europe piloted the Portfolio. Each Portfolio consists of three parts: a Passport, a Language Biography, and a Dossier. Unlike American portfolios that are assessment tools, the ELP is a personal record and is the property of the learner. To be considered official, it must be validated by the Council of Europe and display the Council's seal. (Bailly, et. al., 2002).

The ELP fulfills two purposes: to record language learning information and serve as a pedagogical tool (Little & Perclovà, 2001). The ELP contains records of the learner's language background, knowledge, and skills; official evidence of competence such as test scores, certificates, diplomas, student work; or personal evidence such as video tapes, cassettes, and descriptions of intercultural experiences.

The ELP is considered pedagogical in that its intent is to increase learner autonomy. In order to do that, learning must be made transparent. In other words, learners must come to a clear understanding of the learning process in a personal context. Through self-assessment and reflection, learners can develop the capacity to become responsible for their own learning throughout life (Little, 2002). Today the ELP is being used in many schools in Europe, e.g., all over Finland and in parts of France, Germany, Hungary, and Italy. Interest has also been expressed in adapting the ELP in Japan (Templar, 2002). A variety of ELP models have been developed to fit the age and learning context of the learner. Portfolios for children have been designed to be fun or playful, such a French version that resembles a game board.

High school students starting at age sixteen use an adult version, like the one used in North Rhineland–Westfalia, Germany (*Europäisches Portfolio der Sprachen*, 2000). The adult version is also adapted for use at the university level. Because businesses are accepting the Portfolio's assessment of a learner's language level as a valid credential, universities such as the University of Dublin are also using the Portfolio with their non-foreign language majors.

The Language Passport

The Passport section of the ELP functions like a traveler's passport in that it provides documentation of one's linguistic identity. Its contents include a profile or overview of the learner's language proficiency and use at a given time in all languages studied, a record of certificates and diplomas, and a glance at the learner's language and cultural interaction experiences. This is the only section of the Language Portfolio that is recognized as standard.

The age of the learner determines the type of information recorded. For example, a Passport for early language learners in England contains sections for recording information for:

- languages learned at home, including mother tongue, when not English;
- languages learned at school;
- languages learned out of school;
- contacts with speakers of different languages

(Little & Ushioda, 2002).

This junior version of the ELP and its teachers guide can be downloaded from: www.nacell.olrg.UK/responses/pub_cilt/portfolio.htm. A child completing this Passport might list, for example, in-school or after-school language classes, participation in a summer immersion camp, or interaction with friends who are from another culture and speak another language.

Secondary or postsecondary students would include formal evidence of language proficiency like exam scores, transcripts, diplomas, and certificates. In listing their experiences with the language and culture outside of the classroom, they might include information on a student exchange or host experience, membership in a club, volunteer work with a refugee association, or a work internship. These items can be described in detail in the section on Language Biography.

To provide a profile of language skills, learners make a rough estimate of their competence in a language by using a self-assessment grid based on the Common Reference levels. They do this by first evaluating themselves in the following skills areas: understanding (listening and reading), speaking (spoken interaction and spoken production), and writing.

The purpose of the Passport, like that of the entire Portfolio, is to build self-knowledge and a capacity for reflection and to demonstrate that the Portfolio truly does belong to the learner and not to a school or institution. It is considered the most "official" element of the ELP because of its capacity to facilitate entry and placement.

The Language Biography

Learners have the greatest opportunity to become reflective of their own language learning process in the Language Biography section, which links the official evidence presented in the Passport to the student work in the Dossier. Here learners provide more detail about their language background and explore their language learning skills and goals. They are asked to think about how they learn a language and to plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning. An Irish model for post-primary schools addresses it this way:

- My general aims and reflections
- My checklist of target skills (in five curriculum languages)
- Setting goals and thinking about learning
- Things I notice about language and culture
(Ushioda & Ridley, 2002).

A comprehensive self-assessment appears in the Language Biography in the form of a checklist. Based on the Common Scale of Reference and written in first person, the self-assessment addresses skills that were outlined in the Passport:

Level A Spoken Interaction
I can make simple purchases by stating what I want and asking the price.
I can ask how people are and respond to news. (Ushioda & Ridley, 2002).

Learners are also asked to reflect on how they experience language in their lives. Exploring one's language history, placing language learning in multiple contexts, and writing in much more detail than in the Passport section about intercultural experiences broadens the language learner's spectrum. Of special note is the value this section places on heritage languages, empowering the heritage language speaker in a reversal of the subtractive bilingualism experiences. Instead of focusing on what they do not know about their language of residence, immigrant children can take pride in knowledge of their home language and culture.

The Dossier

In this section learners document their skills and demonstrate what they are capable of producing through work samples of their own choice. Personal work might include projects, written work, audiocassettes, videos, and computer programs. Diplomas, a work report or a curriculum vita could be part of an adult Dossier. Reports from a tutor or personal statements from others about the learner's language skills are also acceptable. These samples are the learners' evidence of the progress they are making. By allowing the students to choose work for the dossier, their language learning becomes more reflective and transparent.

Adapting the model to American contexts

When representatives from NCSSFL met at the February 2003 meeting in Kentucky, all agreed there were benefits to exploring an American version of the ELP. The rationale was that such a portfolio would help students to:

- evaluate and describe their language proficiency in clear and simple terms;
- document and reflect on their language learning and intercultural experiences
inside and outside school;
- inform others about their proficiency in different languages (e.g., when changing schools, starting a language course, participating in an exchange program, applying for a job); and

- set personal language learning objectives and map out ways to achieve them.

NCSSFL members also believed an American portfolio would encourage educators, schools, and other institutions to:

- design culturally responsive programs based on learner strengths and needs;
- obtain information about learners' previous language learning experiences inside and outside school;
- evaluate and document performance in a differentiated way;
- describe their language programs and produce evidence of language learning experiences; and
- connect U.S. standards and guidelines to the internationally accepted Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

But can such a curricular tool be implemented effectively into an American context? What barriers exist that would hinder an American portfolio's implementation?

1. Europe and the U.S. do not share the same historical support for language learning. Years of neglect by the American educational system continue to make P–16 language articulation a struggle, and only recently has the public begun to see value in learning another language. If a tool like the European LanguagePortfolio were in standard use across the U.S., imagine the impact it could have on program development and public attitude toward language learning.
2. Interculturality is not a common expectation for American students. Nonetheless, schools across the nation are searching for ways to increase tolerance and the appreciation for diversity among their students. It is not hard to imagine a positive reaction to the development of a model for learners reflect on and document their own intercultural experiences. Here, too, is a means of making people aware that knowledge of a heritage language is a plus.
3. The concept of portfolio is ambiguous. In American education circles, the portfolio is most often associated with assessment, as in Kentucky where the writing portfolio plays a role in statewide testing. NCSSFL members suggest using a different title, such as "Lingua-Folio USA!" to avoid confusion.
4. The concept of self-assessment poses a problem for some educators who are uncomfortable with trusting students to assess themselves. Frank Heyworth, secretary general of the European Association of Quality Language Services (EAQUALS), related news of an unpublished study in Switzerland that shows a very high correlation between students' self-assessment levels and

their test scores.

5. The European Portfolio is based on the Common Scale of Reference. In order to reflect our national standards, any self-assessment would have to be aligned to the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines.

Where do we go from here?

To date little research has been published on the effectiveness of the European Language Portfolio (Little & Ushioda, 2002; Schärer, 2001). Additional research is needed to determine the extent to which the ELP is effective. It will also be interesting to watch how widespread the use of the ELP becomes in Europe and around the world. Pilot programs of an adapted ELP are being conducted in schools in several states under the direction of state foreign language supervisors. If results prove positive, there could be a push to promote an American Language Portfolio.

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Appendix A

Global Scale

Proficient User	**C2**	Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarize information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.
	C1	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognize implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organizational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
Independent User	**B2**	Can understand the main ideas of complex on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialization. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
	B1	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics

		which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes & ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
Basic User	**A2**	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.
	A1	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

3
Nebraska World Languages PreK–16 Initiative

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In September 1997, the Nebraska Department of Education and the University of Nebraska joined forces to implement the Nebraska PreK–16 Initiative, a statewide effort aimed at improving student achievement. The goal of the Initiative is to ensure that all students are properly instructed on a continual basis in order to prepare them for the challenges of college and work. Success for students in both their educational experiences and workplace experiences increasingly depends on a high level of a variety of complex skills. The Nebraska World Languages PreK–16 Initiative offered an opportunity for world language educators from across the state to collaborate and determine what students should know and be able to do as world language learners. In a sequential area like foreign language it is particularly important to have an articulated PreK–16 program that provides a seamless educational path for all students. The initiative also provided the impetus to establish an ongoing working relationship among all world language educators to foster the teaching and learning of world languages.

Symposium of postsecondary educators

A one-day symposium hosted by Creighton University in Omaha on April 21, 2003, was the first phase of building collaboration among all world language educators across the state. It provided an opportunity for foreign language educators from all Nebraska postsecondary institutions to meet, interact, and find solutions. The group explored how world language educators from pre-school to postsecondary could work together to improve world language education in Nebraska. The symposium objectives were to provide an opportunity to initiate discussions about PreK–16 foreign language education, discuss common issues and challenges, create a statewide communication network for foreign language postsecondary educators via the Nebraska Foreign Language web site and an electronic conference center, and find methods to increase communication among elementary, secondary, and postsecondary educators. After initial discussions, issues were identified. Educators continue to discuss solutions through an electronic conference center.

Nebraska World Languages PreK–16 Initiative—Nebraska K–12 Foreign Language Frameworks Essential Learnings Articulated from a PreK–16 Perspective

As the second phase of the initiative, the Nebraska PreK–16 World Language Task Force met on June 17 and 18, 2003, in Lincoln to articulate the Nebraska K–12 Foreign Language Frameworks Essential Learnings from a PreK–16 perspective. The task force provided an opportunity for PreK-16 foreign language teachers to communicate about foreign language education in elementary, secondary, and higher education levels through roundtable discussions. The discussions set the stage for the task force to articulate the Nebraska K–12 Foreign Language Frameworks goals of communication, culture, comparisons, connections, and community from the beginning, developmental, and expanding stages to a P–16 perspective. The product of the task force was the document, the *Nebraska World Languages PreK–16 Initiative-Nebraska K–12 Foreign Language Frameworks Essential Learnings Articulated from a PreK–16 Perspective*, which provides a resource for world language educators. It communicates to the many audiences, especially to students and educators, the expectations of which *Nebraska Foreign Language Frameworks* progress indicators can be achieved by students after the completion of a variety of typical programs of world language instruction. The goal of the document is to offer a scaffold for a sequential, articulated world language program and provide guidance to assist second language educators in making decisions on the curriculum, objectives students can achieve based on the amount of class time, as well as the depth and breadth of the second language experience.

The depth and breadth of the programs vary according to the amount of formal world language instruction the student receives, the quality of that instruction, and the degree of complexity of that study. The varied developmental levels of students also reflect the amount of proficiency and expectations a student can achieve in the second language. For example, elementary students in a Foreign Language in the Elementary School (FLES) program will still be at the novice level after five or six years of instruction. The program does not provide students with enough time for in-depth study of the second language, nor are the children old enough to use complex language that is only introduced a few minutes per week. On the other hand, five years of world language study at the college level can produce students who reach the intermediate levels of proficiency. These students are able to analyze complex grammatical structures and receive intense instruction several days per week.

It takes thousands of hours of study to become proficient in a world language. Therefore, the best time to start world language study is in the elementary school. At that level, students are able to reproduce the sounds of the language much more efficiently and accurately. The more in depth the elementary program, the quicker the students can become proficient as they continue world language study throughout their school years. Pre-kindergarten through postsecondary articulated programs provide opportunities for students to achieve all the progress indicators listed in the *Nebraska Foreign Language Frameworks* to become proficient at the advanced or superior levels of proficiency.

Students in Nebraska may start and end their world language experience at a variety of grade levels. The committee selected the following levels as the more typical time periods Nebraska students take world language:

- K–5 World Language in the Elementary School (FLES): once or twice a week
- K–5 Immersion program: 50% or more of the content taught in the second language
- 6–8 Middle school: After two semesters of study
- 6–8 Middle school: After four semesters of study
- 9–12 High school: After two years, four years and five years of study
- 13–16 Post-Secondary: After two semesters, four semesters, and a major

There are many more examples of world language programs in Nebraska schools that students may complete. However, the above programs represent the most common experiences for students. World language educators will need to evaluate their particular programs and adjust the expectations accordingly.

The opening sentence of each category of this document states a world language proficiency level that students can achieve. At the novice level of proficiency students are communicating with words or memorized phrases. At the intermediate level, students are able to speak in sentences. At the advanced level, students speak in paragraphs in the past, present, and future tenses. (ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines-Speaking, Revised 1999). The purpose of these statements of proficiency is to emphasize that even though students can achieve the progress indicators listed, they do so only at the level stated. "Express basic needs" can be accomplished at the novice level by stating, "The bathroom, please" in the target language. At the advanced level, however, the students can say, "Can you tell me where the bathroom is, please?"

The Nebraska Foreign Language Frameworks was the source of the progress indicators. As world language educators use this document to make decisions on program development and curriculum, it is important to identify other sections of the *Frameworks* that will also act as resources in the decision-making process. The "Classroom Examples" section provides ideas for activities to be used in the classroom to implement the progress indicators.

The "Learning Scenarios" section describes activities in more detail. The "Curriculum Planning" section outlines the complete process for writing the curriculum beginning with the end in mind. Of course, curriculum planning is not complete without identifying the "Assessments" needed to show that the students have achieved the objectives. For all the variety of students in the classroom, the "Strategies for Diverse Learners" section lists many different ways of designing instruction to meet the needs of all students.

The articulation document is of great benefit to world language educators, students, and other interested audiences when decisions are made in planning world language curriculum. The expectations listed are targets for student performance at various entry and exit points typically found in Nebraska programs. Educators can adjust these targets to meet the needs of their students. The depth and breadth of programs, students' developmental levels, and effective articulation through the grades all determine the level of world language proficiency students can achieve. **"Start early; stay longer"** was the motto of the writers of the *Nebraska Foreign Language Frameworks*, expressing the need for elementary world language programs in the state articulated all the way through the college experience.

Nebraska World Languages Portfolio

The third phase of the Initiative is the Nebraska World Languages Portfolio. The portfolio is intended for use by students in PreK-16 world language classrooms. It demonstrates what students know and can do in a language other than their first language and is an instrument for students that measures their language growth over time.

The portfolio consists of three sections. Section One, the Language Journey, is a reflective analysis of the process of learning languages. Section Two, the Passport, includes self-assessment checklists that identify language knowledge, skills, cultural understanding, and proficiency levels. Section Three, the Dossier of Evidence, consists of a collection of examples of students' best work. Teachers are encouraged to adapt the portfolio to their own classroom situation. As an assessment tool, the portfolio can be shared with parents, other educators, administrators, guidance counselors, college admission personnel, and prospective employers. The World Language Portfolio has been modeled after well-accepted documents such as the *European Language Portfolio* and the *Nebraska World Languages PreK–16 Initiative Articulation*.

Nebraska World Language educators were invited to pilot this project in their classroom for the 2003–2004 school year. They will conduct action research and collect data as part of the pilot project. The overall goal is to develop a user-friendly and time-manageable portfolio for students to document their learning experiences.

Conclusion

Nebraska world language educators have identified a three-phase initiative to better meet the needs of Nebraska PreK-16 students. Starting with the work of the postsecondary educators identifying issues in articulation, the work continued into the summer 2003 with the identification of Nebraska Foreign Language Frameworks' progress indicators that could be achieved at the various levels of language study. Finally, using the European portfolio model, a Nebraska world language portfolio was created to create a standardized portfolio option for students to demonstrate their world language proficiency levels. Professional development activities throughout the year provide dissemination of all the elements described above. More information about the initiative can be accessed at the Nebraska World Language web site at: www.nde.state.ne.us/FORLG/.

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4
The Role of Gender in L2 Interaction: Socialization via L2 Materials

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Promoting student–student interaction is a goal of many educators in most disciplines. In the 1960s, for example, an "oracy" movement championed the educational value of interaction in all classrooms. Drawing analogies to literacy, Wilkinson (1965) felt that oracy (or interaction) was "a condition of learning in all subjects" (p. 58). For the foreign language educator, however, interaction has only recently (post 1980s) received serious attention. In fact, for decades interaction was considered "little more than a reinforcement activity; an opportunity for students to strengthen their recall of grammar rules and vocabulary lists" (Gascoigne, 2003, p. 1). Fortunately, in our post-communicative world, the productive use of language is now being viewed as an enactment of mental processes as well as an occasion for learning (Swain & Lapkin, 1998). For Gass & Varonis (1986), for example, interaction plays a central role in language acquisition by providing learners with "a forum for testing out hypothesis about the target language" (p. 318). Similarly, Oliver (1998) believes that interaction is beneficial because

> It provides learners with the opportunity to obtain comprehensible input that is uniquely modified for learners' individual circumstances. It also allows them to modify their own contributions to a conversation in order to make themselves understood. (p. 373)

Given the force of our profession's shift toward learner output and interaction in the classroom from a traditional teacher-dominated model (Gascoigne, 2003; Gass, Mackey, & Pica, 1989; Long, 1995, 1996; Platt & Brooks, 1994; Polio & Gass, 1998), the implications of this move must be examined. One important facet of the increased attention to classroom interaction is the role of gender in the interaction process. Indeed, within first-language (L1) interaction studies, important gender-specific styles have been well-documented (Bacon & Finnemann, 1992; Cameron, McAlinden, &

O'Leary, 1998; Coates, 1989; Mulac, Wieman, Widenmann, & Gibson, 1998; Swann, 1998).

To a much lesser extent, the effect of gender on L2 interaction has also been examined (Gascoigne, 2003; Gass & Varonis, 1986; Pica et al., 1991), yet is in need of further attention; "this is an area that has heretofore been neglected among L2 acquisition researchers" (Gass & Varonis, 1986, p. 326). The following investigation seeks to extend this line of inquiry to the pedagogical materials used in today's classroom. Specifically, it will review how male and female interaction styles are presented to L2 learners in target-language scripts such as textbook and workbook dialogues, and audio segments. The driving question is: Do L2 pedagogical materials mirror stereotypical male and female interaction (L1 and L2) styles? In other words, do L2 materials perpetuate and reinforce the "unequal partnership" (Gass & Varonis, p. 349) that often exists in interaction situations?

Gender styles

A great deal of linguistic and sociolinguistic research has focused on the effect of gender in L1 interaction, most of which has been conducted in English. Among the manifold and recurring gender-specific interaction styles, we find that males tend to use linguistic devices such as interruptions, directives, and sentence-initial conjunctions. Females tend to rely more heavily upon questions, justifiers, intensive adverbs, personal pronouns, and word-initial adverbs (Aries, 1967; Mulac et al., 1998; Taps & Yancy-Martin, 1990). In a 1998 mixed-gender dyad study, Mulac et al. found that

> Men used more of what might be considered a direct or overt control tactic, the use of interruptions (Let's go on to the next topic and see). Consistent with this analysis, their discourse also displayed a greater use of directives (Why don't you write down our answers?) And men maintained the floor through more frequent use of conjunction/fillers to begin a sentence. In contrast, women made greater use of what appears to be indirect control strategy questions (What's next?). In addition, they also made greater use of justifiers, apparently sensing a need to provide a rationale for their statements. (p. 330)

When in mixed-gender groups, Swann (1989) found that in contrast to the "stereotype of the over-talkative women. . . it is men who dominate the talk. . . men have been found to use more interruptions. . . and simply to talk more than women" (p. 123). For Janet Holmes (1995), men use interaction as a means of gaining and exchanging information, whereas women use it as a way to connect to others.

Females, it would appear, disagree less often—or at least soften their oppositions more than males. Females also tend to use more hedges, or words and phrases designed to reduce the force of an utterance, such as "a bit" or the tag “didn’t you?” Not surprisingly, given the cooperative nature of female language, Johnson (1997) found that in cross-sex conversations women fared “poorly in comparison with men in terms of turn taking, interruption, and holding the floor” (p. 9). In fact, the cooperative nature of typical female speech is so well documented that it has been christened “polyphonic” (Coates, 1989, p. 109), reflecting collaboration and the common use of minimal responses (“yes,” “humm,” “right”) that serve to signal the female’s supportive role in the dialogue. Men, on the other hand, tend to rely on a hierarchical one-at-a-time mode of interaction at times permitting monologues, or turns at “playing the expert” (Coates, p. 109). Other typical female characteristics include “hesitations, intensifiers, qualifiers, tag questions, and rising intonation in declaratives (Cameron, McAlinden, & O’Leary, 1989, p. 75).

Although drastically fewer in number, studies examining the effect of gender in L2 interaction (Gascoigne, 2003; Gass & Varonis, 1986; Pica et al., 1991) are noting similarities between L1 gender styles and those in an L2. Gascoigne, for example, sought to determine whether or not gender-specific interaction styles could be detected among English-speaking students communicating in their L2 (French), and how any detected trends correlated with those already found in L1 studies. Audiorecording the interaction of 20 third-semester post-secondary students divided into male-male, male-female, female-female dyads over a six-week period, she concluded that

> there may be diverging male and female L2 interaction styles and that in many respects the L2 styles mirror those identified in the L1 research: females tend to use more hesitant or mitigating speech, females employ more minimal responses to signal their participation in a co-constructed dialogue, and males produce more conversation leads. (p. 14)

The males also produced more words and turns in the mixed dyads, as also evidenced in the L1 research.

Socialization patterns

Since the 1970s, there has been increasing concern expressed regarding “the role of the formal education system in reproducing gender differences and inequalities” (Swann & Graddol, 1995, p. 135). Studies of L1 classroom interaction have long shown that boys tend to dominate classroom interaction and that educators, at times, reinforce this type of behavior by giving additional time and attention to males (Aries, 1967; Cameron, McAlinden, & O’Leary, 1989; Holmes, 1995; Sadker & Sadker, 1995; Swann & Graddol, 1995). Our educational environment “seems to favor boys, at least in the sense that those who do most of the talking and are able to get their views across tend to be boys” (Swann & Graddol, 1995, p. 136). Because most language students and teachers believe that progress is made by using the target language as much and in as authentic contexts as possible, L2 learners have additional reason to believe that their progress depends to a considerable extent on access to the floor, interaction, and the teacher's attention (Holmes, 1995). Therefore, it is "females who lost out. Their polite ways of participating in classroom talk means they are disadvantaged in mixed-sex classrooms" (p. 203).

For Davies (1989), masculinity and femininity are structural properties of our society, not necessarily of the individuals. Therefore, our social environments—particularly educational contexts—condition and reinforce gender-specific discursive patterns. Indeed, everyday discourse forces individuals into a dualistic maleness or femaleness that is quite incompatible with principles of equity and yet is not recognized by the speakers as doing so. Images, metaphors, narrative structures, terms of address, teaching practices, can all function to position girls as marginal within educational discourse. (Davies, 1998, p. 238)

Similarly, Gemmill and Zoch Schaible (1991) believe that our culture pushes individuals both covertly and overtly into their "appropriate" gender roles and that the role sets are so embedded that they may be easily extended to new contexts such as small group and L2 interaction.

Materials review

What do target language pedagogical materials communicate to the language student in terms of gender roles during L2 interaction? To answer this question, the following pages review target-language interaction as it is presented in five popular first-year post-secondary French textbooks all issued between 1999 and 2002.[1] Scores were recorded using interaction measures designed by Gass & Varonis (1996). Interaction was therefore quantified by amount of talk (number of words), number of turns, leading, overlap, as well as the amount of softening/mitigating devices (hesitations, qualifiers, tag-questions), minimal responses (back-channel speech) and monologues (greater than 50 uninterrupted words) used by gender per dialogue.

It was expected that L2 pedagogical materials would reflect and therefore reinforce dominant gender-specific patterns in that males would produce more words, take more turns, lead more exchanges, produce more overlap (talk over their partners) and engage in more monologues (extended uninterrupted discourse) than females. It was also expected that females would produce more minimal responses ("yes," "true," "I see") and mitigating/softening speech ("I think," "maybe") than males.

Of the five textbook programs selected, one chapter (the median chapter) was targeted for detailed review. All dialogues involving either one male and one female, two males, or two females appearing in the target chapter textbook, workbook, and ancillary oral material (student or lab CD) were reviewed. A total of twenty-four dialogues involving two speakers were identified in the target chapters. Of the twenty-four dialogues, six were from male-male dyads, six from female-female dyads, and twelve from mixed gender dyads. Averaged findings by dyad and gender are presented in Tables 1 and 2 below.

Table 1: Average Interaction Scores by Gender in Mixed (Male-Female) Dyads
Mixed Pairs

	Male	**Female**
Number of Words	89.30	77.60
Number of Turns	6.75	6.90
Conversation Leads	0.58	0.41
Overlaps	0.16	0.00
Monologues	0.00	0.00
Minimal Responses	0.16	0.41
Mitigating Devices	0.00	0.00

Table 2: Average Interaction Scores by Gender in Same-Sex Dyads

	Male[1]-	**Male[2]**	**Female[1]-**	**Female[2]**
Number of Words	34.25	29.25	72.00	84.25
Number of Turns	2.50	2.25	0.70	0.70
Conversation Leads	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50
Overlaps	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Monologues	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Minimal Responses	0.00	0.00	0.50	0.50
Mitigating Devices	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Findings

Perhaps the most surprising finding was the lack or near lack of certain linguistic elements for either of the genders in any of the pairings. For example, there were no examples of mitigating devices or marked hesitant language. There were, with one exception, no overlaps or cases where one interlocutor interrupted or spoke over their partner. There were no monologues and very few minimal responses (« oui, » « Ah oui »).

As for the mixed dyads, although there were subtle differences (males produced more words and leads than females; females took more turns and produced more minimal responses) none reached significance ($p \leq .05$). The only difference reaching significance concerned the number of words uttered between male-male and female-female dyads: the all-female dialogues were significantly longer than the all-male dialogues. However, even between same-gender pairs (male-male versus female-female), differences for all other measures (turns, leads, overlaps, monologues, minimal responses, and mitigating devices) were either nonexistent or negligible. Contrary to initial expectations, the dialogues examined here do not reflect traditional male and female speaking styles.

In the mixed dyads males did speak more than females, but the difference was negligible. However, when comparing same gender dyads (male-male versus female-female) the females spoke significantly more than the males. Across all dyad types the females produced more minimal responses than males (as expected), but again these differences did not reach significance. Males did produce more overlaps (n = 1) than the females; however with only one occurrence of an overlap in the entire set, few if any conclusions can be drawn.

Perhaps the most interesting finding coming from the dialogue analysis lies not so much in gender differences, but rather in the discrepancies between the artificial language of the dialogue and that of authentic natural discourse. The complete lack of monologues, hesitations, or mitigating devices or the near lack of overlaps and minimal responses (regardless of the gender of the speaker) is not representative of natural discourse. Indeed, authentic, as opposed to pedagogically-prepared, speech is rarely without hesitations, fillers, and flaws. Native speakers of every language wrestle with false-starts, hesitations, and word searches. For Brown (1994), everyone makes mistakes in both native and second language situations. Native speakers are normally capable of recognizing and correcting such lapses or mistakes, which are not the result of a deficiency in competence but the result of some sort of imperfection or breakdown in the process of producing speech. These hesitations, slips of the tongue, random ungrammaticalities, and other performance lapses in native speaker production also occur in second language speech. (p. 165)

Production mistakes or slips are not necessarily bad. In fact they can facilitate comprehension by providing natural repetition and pauses that afford the interlocutor additional time to make sense of incoming information. The artificially-created dialogues examined in this review, however, were stripped of such linguistic hesitancies, along with gender traces.

Conclusion

If pedagogical environments can condition and reinforce gender-specific discursive patterns (Davies, 1989), then all educators, including foreign language teachers, must be careful of the potentially marginalizing messages we send to our students. The goal of this inquiry was not to prove or disprove a correlation between pedagogical materials and resulting student interaction, but rather to examine whether or not materials typically presented to students of French tend to employ gender-typed language. Indeed, it appears that many textbook authors have made an effort to avoid a stereotyped language in their pedagogical dialogues. As encouraging as this is, it is also clear that these gender-cleansed exchanges are lacking other authentic discursive elements. Therefore, textbook authors may want to consider infusing dialogues with natural discursive elements while maintaining the gender-neutrality they have thus far successfully achieved.

Notes

1. To keep the focus on the trends rather that the texts, individual textbook programs are not named. This information may be requested from the author.

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5
Input Enhancement: A Way of Promoting L2 Learner's Comprehension and Noticing Linguistic Forms

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This study attempts to examine the impact of written input enhancement and text simplification on L2 comprehension of text content and recognition of targeted grammatical structures provided in the input. The issue of input enhancement and/or text simplification is argued to be important because it makes the input more comprehensible to L2 learners (Leow, 1993). This comprehensibility of the input facilitates learners' comprehension in that learners are able to get more passage information from the enhanced input and shorter text (Leow, 1993, 1997b). Comprehensibility of input also provides more linguistic information for learners' developing their linguistic system. Because learners are not overloaded with complicated input, they are able to notice grammatical forms that may not be part of their developing grammars (Krashen, 1982, 1985).

The main objectives of this paper are: (a) to present more empirical evidence to support the effectiveness of written input manipulation and text length; (b) to build on L2 research on this area; and (c) to provide pedagogical insights and practices to develop L2 reading comprehension and raising attention to grammar. First, theoretical and empirical bases of textual manipulation are discussed, followed by a presentation of findings of an empirical study conducted on high intermediate university L2 French learners. Pedagogical implications of this study and implications for future research on written input manipulation are addressed at the end of this paper.

Theoretical foundation

The need to strike a balance between focusing on L2 grammatical forms and accurate production of these forms and promoting meaningful aural and written communication has been a recent concern of many researchers in the field of second language acquisition. In the area of reading, many researchers have been interested in addressing "the reading process under an attentional input processing framework" (Leow, 1997b:152) claiming that since L2 learners' amount of attention paid to L2 input relies heavily on the amount of cognitive effort required to process the input, learners should be provided with enhanced and simplified input where "some form of attention is crucial in promoting further processing of grammatical information in adult learners' L2 development" (Leow, 1997b:152).

Some of the theoretical approaches that have advanced this role for attention in both aural and written modes are: 'focus on form' approach by Long (1991), 'noticing' hypothesis by Schmidt (1990, 1993, 1994, 1995), 'model of input processing' by Tomlin and Villa (1994), and 'model of the relationship between attention and memory' by Robinson (1995) (Leow, 1997b: 152). Particularly, in written mode one technique argued to effect L2 readers' comprehension of text content and noticing of grammatical features in the input is textual manipulation. Among the various types of textual manipulation are: input and text simplification, defined by Leow (1993, 1995) as phonological, morphological, lexical, or length text modifications; input enhancement that is making salient the targeted linguistic items through the use of typographic manipulation and typographic cues such as bolding, shading, underlining, uppercasing. (Jourdenais, Ota, Stauffer, Boyson, & Doughty, 1995; Shook, 1990, 1994; Leow, 1993, 1995, 1997b).

Empirical evidence

Earlier research studies on the second language reading process have focused mainly on identifying and classifying strategies L2 readers opt for while dealing with the information in the text and on proposing instructional methods to enhance and promote reading comprehension (e.g., Anderson, 1991; Barnett, 1988; Block, 1986; Carrell, 1989; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1992; Oxford & Ehrman, 1992, etc.). Recent studies, however, have advanced the role of attention by addressing the reading process under an attentional input processing framework and by investigating the effects of input enhancement and simplification on L2 readers' comprehension and acquisition of grammatical forms (e.g., Cadierno, 1995; Doughty, 1991; Fotos, 1993; Jourdenais et al., 1995; Lightbown & Spada, 1990; Leow, 1993, 1995, 1997a, 1997b; Shook, 1990, 1994; Spada & Lightbown, 1993; VanPatten, 1990; VanPatten & Cadierno, 1993; VanPatten & Sanz, 1995; Watanabe, 1992, 1993, 1997; White, 1994; White, Spada, Lightbown & Ranta, 1991.

A review of this recent literature on L2 reading research and on input enhancement reflects, on the one hand, a formidable body of work devoted in the areas of L2 English and in the context of other languages and, on the other hand, controversial findings with regard to the effects of input enhancement and text simplification on L2 readers' comprehension of text content and intake of linguistic forms.

In the context of English, among the studies conducted is White et al.'s study (1991) that investigated the effect of textual input enhancement in drawing the attention of grade six ESL francophone readers to the target forms in the input. Findings of this study revealed that textual input enhancement had no effect and was not useful in discovering the investigated grammatical rule. Another study directed to L2 English is Watanabe's (1997) that investigated the effects of different ways of input modification, namely appositives, single and multiple-choice marginal glosses on ESL Japanese-speaking learners processing of input, their initial learning, and their retention of the meaning of target words in the text. The results of this study indicated that learners exposed to more than one type of input modification performed significantly better than the ones exposed to non-modified input.

Among the scholarly studies directed to other L2 languages, especially Spanish, notable are Leow's (1993, 1995) studies in which the researcher investigated the impact of input simplification on adult L2 Spanish learners' intake of Spanish present perfect and subjunctive forms in both modes (written and aural). His 1993 study involved 137 college-level students, and his 1995 study involved 213 students enrolled in the first and fourth semester levels. These students were assigned to one of the four conditions: (1) a simplified or (2) unsimplified text with the present perfect form and (3) a simplified or (4) unsimplified text with the subjunctive; all were exposed to written and aural input. Findings in both studies reveal no significant effect of textual manipulation. "Reducing learners' cognitive demands to processing for meaning through simplification," according to Leow, "did not produce any significant increase in their intake of the linguistic items contained in the input in either mode" (Leow, 1997b:153).

In Leow's (1997b) study involving 84 native speakers of English enrolled in the second semester of Spanish study and investigating the effects of both written input enhancement and text length on these L2 learners' comprehension of text content and intake of impersonal imperative Spanish forms, data revealed controversial results. There was evidence supporting the effectiveness of text length on reading comprehension but not on intake of formal structures. However, data revealed no significant main effect for input enhancement on either comprehension of the text or intake of grammatical structures.

In the same line, Shook in his (1990) study found no significant difference between the three groups' performances on a free written recall task that was designed to measure learners' comprehension of the text content.

Contrary to these findings, Shook, in his (1994) study that investigated the effects of input enhancement of grammatical information on 125 second-and fourth-semester college-level learners' intake of both Spanish present perfect and the relative pronouns *que* and *quien,* found significant difference for input enhancement of grammatical forms on learners' intake and production of these grammatical structures between the group exposed to enhanced/instructed condition and the other two groups exposed to enhanced/unstructed condition and non-enhanced. The enhanced/instructed group that was instructed to pay attention to the targeted forms outperformed the other two groups in both tasks.

Findings of Jourdenais et al.'s (1995) study also contradict Leow's (1993, 1995) and Shook's (1990) studies. Jourdenais et al.'s study investigated the impact of typographic manipulation and typographic cues (bolding, shading, and underlining) on noticing the imperfect and preterit forms in the written input. Ten college-level students enrolled in a second-semester class were assigned to two groups: the enhancement group that received a text enhanced by underlining and shading preterit forms and bolding and underlining imperfect in the written input, and the comparison group that received a non-enhanced version of the text and were given a written task where they had to think aloud while performing it. The comparison of the performance of the two groups reveal that the enhancement group produced more episodes related to selection and conjugation of the two forms (the preterit and imperfect) and more target grammatical structures on the written task than the comparison group. The above-cited studies have shed some light on the effects of written input enhancement and simplification on readers' comprehension of text content and on raising learners' attention to linguistic forms provided in the input. It is then of both theoretical importance and practical significance to conduct this empirical study. Theoretically, the findings would support or refute the hypothesis that L2 written input enhancement promotes both comprehension of a text and recognition of grammatical structures. From a pedagogical point of view, the findings would address the practical characteristics of written input manipulation and text length on L2 French learners. In designing this study, we were inspired by the methodology design that Leow used in his (1997b) study that investigated the impersonal imperative Spanish forms.

The Study

Participants

An intact class of 19 high intermediate university L2 French students participated in this study. Subjects were randomly assigned to four conditions: 5 students to a long non-enhanced text, 5 students to a long enhanced text, 5 students to a short non-enhanced text, and 4 to a short enhanced text. Subjunctive was chosen as the target linguistic form for this study. The reason for choosing this grammatical form is because of its complexity. The research questions that guided this study were:

1. Will learners exposed to input enhancement achieve higher comprehension of the text content than those exposed to non-enhanced input?

2. Will learners exposed to input enhancement recognize and recall more new subjunctive verbs contained in the written text than learners exposed to non-enhanced text?
3. Will text length have effects on L2 readers' comprehension of the

text content?

4. Will text length have effects on L2 readers' recognition and recall of subjunctive forms provided in the text?

Materials

The reading text is an extract from Frantz Fanon's essay, "Pour la révolution africaine" in the textbook *Le Français dans le village global* by Furgiuele Rosanna and Gill Rosalind (pp. 113-115). To address the effects of input modification and text length, four versions of this text were prepared: the original text (text 1) and three other versions. The first version (text 2) comprised the original text with one difference: 10 instances of subjunctive verb forms were bolded and written in uppercase letters. The second (text 3) and the third (text 4) versions were substantially shortened versions of text 1 and text 2 respectively, comprising only the section of these texts that contained the highlighted forms found in text 2.

Instrumentation

The data were collected by means of two instruments, a comprehension task and a multiple-choice recognition task. The comprehension task was comprised of ten questions based on the reading passage. The ten questions addressed only the information contained in the shortened versions. Participants were required to answer in French or English since producing the target language was not the main purpose of this study. A multiple-choice recognition task consisted of 10 items taken from the text. The ten questions addressed only the target verbs on the shortened versions. The choices consisted of the same verb in different tense forms (present indicative, imperfect, conditional, and subjunctive). Participants were asked to fill in the blank with the appropriate form of the verb in the subjunctive. This task comprised both the pre-test and post-test.

Procedures

One week before the experiment, participants completed a pre-test designed to measure their grammatical recognition of subjunctive. On the day of the experiment, participants randomly received a package that contained one of the four texts, the comprehension questions and multiple-choice recognition task (the post-test). They were asked to read the text at their own pace. After completing the text, they were requested to perform the tasks in the order presented. Each correct answer was scored one point for a total of 10 in both comprehension and recognition tasks.

Data analysis

The mean scores and standard deviation for each group on the comprehension and the pre-test and post-test recognition tasks were calculated. To measure learners' comprehension and recognition of linguistic forms, a two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and a repeated-measures ANOVA were performed on the raw scores obtained on a comprehension task and a multiple choice recognition task respectively.

Table 1:
Mean Scores and Standard Deviations for Each Group on the Comprehension Task

		Text	
Input enhancement		Long	Short
Non-enhanced	**M**	**4.40**	**8.20**
	SD	3.64	1.30
		n=5	n=5
Enhanced			
	M	**8.00**	**9.50**
	SD	1.87	.57
		n=5	n=4

Findings and discussion

Table **1** and Table **2** display the mean scores and standard deviations for each group on the comprehension and on the pre-test and post-test recognition tasks. Findings of the comprehension task reveal that the means of the enhanced short text are higher than those of the non-enhanced short and the enhanced long texts. Participants who had been exposed to enhanced short text showed higher comprehension of these groups. The non-enhanced long text group, however, did score lower in the comprehension task. In the recognition task, all the four groups did better in the post-test, but the groups exposed to short versions either enhanced or non-enhanced performed better in this test than the other groups.

The results of the ANOVA (see **Table 3**) revealed significant main effect for input enhancement (F[1.19]= 6.61, p=.021). Participants exposed to the enhanced texts did demonstrate significantly better comprehension of the text content when compared to those exposed to the non-enhanced texts. ANOVA also revealed a significant effect for text length (F[1.19]= 5.64, p=.031). Participants who were exposed to the short versions comprehended substantially more the content of the text when compared to participants exposed to the long versions. However, the interaction between input manipulation and text length did not reach a statistical significant (F[1,19]=1.24, p.282).

Table 2:
Mean Scores and Standard Deviations for Each Group on the Pre-test and Post-test Recognition Task

Input enhancement		**Text** Long		Short	
		Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test
Non-enhanced	**M**	**5.60**	**6.40**	**8.20**	**9.60**
	SD	2.30	2.19	1.30	
.89			n=5		n=5
Enhanced					
	M	**6.00**	**7.80**	**6.75**	**9.75**
	SD	1.88	2.25	.95	.50
		n=5		n=4	

Table 3:
The Result of ANOVA on Comprehension Task

Source of variation	**df**	**Sum of Squares**	**Mean Square**	**F**	**P**
Input enhancement .021*	1	28.247	28.247	6 . 6 0 9	
Text length	1	33.047	33.047	5.649	.031*
Input enhancement X Text length	1	6.22	6.22	1.224	.282
Error	**75**	**1189.00**	**5.000**		

n= 19
*p< .05

The finding of the repeated-measures ANOVA performed on the total mean scores obtained on the pre-test and post-test of the recognition task revealed a significant main effect for input enhancement (F[1,19]= 35.57, p=0001) as the **Table 4** shows. Participants exposed to the enhanced texts did demonstrate significantly better recognition and recall of the targeted forms when compared to those exposed to the non-enhanced texts. There was also a difference in performance between participants exposed to the enhanced short and non-enhanced long versions (F[1,19]= 7.45, p=016). The interaction between input enhancement and text length was also found to be significant. This reveals that both input enhancement and text length facilitated participants' recognition of the subjunctive forms contained in the input.

Table 4:
ANOVA Results on the Recognition Task

Source of variation	df	Sum of **Squares**	Mean **Square**	F	p
Input enhancement	1	21.491	21.491	35.57	.0001*
Text length	1	4.499	4.499	7.45	.016*
Input enhancement x Text length	1	3.595	2.595	4.30	.05*

n= 19
*p<.05

Based on these results, the answer to the first research question addressing if learners exposed to input enhancement would achieve higher comprehension of the content information than those exposed to non-enhanced input appears to be positive. Input enhancement does appear to have a significant impact on learners' comprehension of the text content when compared to learners who did not receive this kind of input enhancement. In other words, highlighting the subjunctive forms in the input through the use of typographic cues, i.e., bolding and using uppercase letters, did appear to be effective in focusing readers' attention on these targeted forms to comprehend the passage. This finding runs counter to Shook's (1990) and Leow's (1993, 1995, 1997b) studies that found no significant results.

The answer to the second question that asked whether learners exposed to input enhancement recognize more subjunctive forms contained in the written text than learners exposed to non-enhanced text appears to be positive. Learners exposed to the enhanced input seem to recognize more subjunctive forms when compared to learners not exposed to these enhanced forms in the input. Findings of this study corroborate findings reported in Shook's (1994), Jourdenais et al.'s (1995) that input enhancement promotes attention to or noticing of targeted L2 forms in the input. But, this significant effect of input enhancement on readers' intake contradicts findings reported in Leow's (1993, 1995, 1997b), and White et al.'s (1991) in which textual manipulations of the input was not found to facilitate learners' intake of the target linguistic forms.

This discrepancy in findings with regard to the effects of input enhancement in noticing more target linguistic and grammatical forms may be attributed according to Leow (1997b) to "some variables that need to be considered and controlled, such as the amount or level of reader's attention they pay to the enhanced forms; the role of awareness while interacting with the input; the amount of exposure, and learners' level of L2 proficiency" (p. 180).

Moreover, the answer to the third question asking whether text length would have effects on L2 readers' comprehension of the content of the text appears to be positive. Learners exposed to the short versions of the text comprehended the content of the text significantly more than those exposed to the longer versions. This suggests that a simplified and short text plays an important role in facilitating learners' comprehension of the written text. This finding lends empirical support to the Leow (1997b) and Shook (1990) studies in which it was found that short texts facilitated L2 readers' comprehension of the text.

With regard to question 4 that addressed the effects of text length on L2 readers' recognition of subjunctive forms contained in the text, the answer is also positive. A significant statistical difference was found between learners exposed to short and those exposed to long versions. Learners exposed to short versions did substantially outperform on the recognition task. This finding, however, runs counter to Leow's (1997b) in which text simplification did not promote learners' noticing of Spanish impersonal imperative forms and intake more of these forms.

Pedagogical implications of the study

This study makes informal pedagogical decisions on the selection of specific types of reading materials. These latter consist of enhanced and short written texts that may have effects on adult reading comprehension and understanding of linguistic items. These findings seem to provide empirical support for authentic written materials. This study has provided empirical evidence that supports the validity and efficacy of authentic written materials and of exposing L2 learners to short enhanced reading texts to facilitate their reading comprehension and recall of subjunctive forms contained in the input. In selecting reading texts, teachers should take into consideration the limited cognitive capacity of learners in the L2 and should manipulate the text to promote comprehension and to pay attention to more grammatical forms before they formally introduce them in the class.

Implications for rurther research

While findings of this present study seem to suggest that written input enhancement and text length have some positive impact on readers' comprehension and on noticing the target L2 grammatical forms, the findings of this study cannot be generalized and need to be taken with some caution due to some limitations and shortcomings. Some of these limitations are the small sample of participants. This study involves only one class of 19 L2 French high intermediate students divided in 4 small groups. Further research involving more than one class of L2 French high intermediate students is needed in order to get a considerable sample of subjects. There is also a need to repeat this study by using learners at different levels of proficiency in L2 and with a wider range of vocabulary knowledge levels. More research is also needed to gather data from a variety of languages with similar or different grammatical structures and rules to find out whether textual manipulation and text length work for all languages. Further research is needed to explore more grammatical structures in French. The target linguistic item investigated here is restricted to the subjunctive forms. Various grammatical structures such as the "passé compose," "imparfait," "conditional," and so on should be investigated to obtain a better view of optimal text length for learning French grammatical structures and to add to the validity of the conclusion. More research is also needed to investigate this aspect via other data collection instruments and methods in order to assess the effects of different data collection methods on learners' performance.

Conclusion

Even though this is the first attempt to report the effectiveness of input enhancement on L2 French readers' comprehension and on noticing French subjunctive form, this study contributes to the field of research of textual manipulation by adding more empirical evidence. This study also addresses the practical aspects of written input enhancement in promoting comprehension, processing, and retaining targeted forms. More importantly, it provides teachers with useful insights into the teaching of L2 French grammatical structures through reading enhanced materials.

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6
Enhancing Reading Comprehension by Attending to Pupil Learning Styles

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The success or failure of Hispanic and African-American students has been attributed to a wide variety of factors. Historically, it has been widely believed that social, economic, and political factors could distract students and prevent their learning (Dunn and Dunn, 1978). According to D'Isa Turner (1993), in the last twenty years, the blame for unsuccessful academic achievement has shifted to schools, teachers, and instructional methods and programs. As a result of this view, there has been an increased awareness in providing high-quality education through the emphasis on students' individual learning needs (Turner, 1993). During the last two decades, research interests have shifted toward the analysis of various learner-related factors (such as personality types, learning style preferences, and learning strategies) and their relationship to different academic skills (Cohen, 2000; Oxford, 2001; Peacock, 2001).

Out of all of the various academic skills, reading comprehension is of utmost importance. However, statistics show a discouraging sight: many school-aged students cannot read at satisfactory levels (Carbo, 1996; Zernike, 2001). One of the reasons for this failure is that current instructional practices in reading do not seem to accommodate the reading styles of many learners, especially ineffective readers (Carbo, 1987; Sudzina, 1993). One possible key to solve this problem is to match literacy activities to individual learning styles (Oxford, 2001). In this article, our goal is to explain how to improve students' reading comprehension by matching literacy assignments to literacy learning style preferences. The authors have sought definitions of what learning styles are and their implications for instruction and learning. We discuss how to match different reading strategies and activities to modality strengths or sensory preferences as well as to determine global and analytic styles. We also provide examples for a wide variety of reading activities that involve different learning preferences. First, we begin by describing teaching and learning implications.

Defining learning styles and strategy preferences and their implications for teaching and learning

Language learning styles and strategies are among the main factors that help to determine how—and how well—our students learn to read and write (Oxford, 2001). By understanding the learning styles of their students, teachers can better meet the learning/reading needs of school-aged students through the creation of optimum learning conditions. To begin with, Oxford (2001) defines learning styles as “general approaches—for example, global or analytic, auditory or visual—that students use in acquiring a new language or in learning any other subject (p.359).” In other words, learning style preferences describe how well a particular person learns under specific conditions (NSRI). Two common dimensions of learning style that are currently associated with language learning are sensory preferences and desired degree of generality.

Sensory preferences or modality strengths can be divided into four areas: visual, auditory, kinesthetic and tactile. These preferences refer to the physical, perceptual learning channels with which a student feels more at ease. Students with visual learning style preference like to read and profit from visual stimulation. For these types of learners, educators find that lectures, conversations, and oral instructions without visual support can be very detrimental to their understanding. In contrast, auditory learners feel comfortable without any type of visual prompt or visual supportive measures, and they can profit from attending to lectures, class conversations, and oral instructions given by the teacher. These types of students are interested in classroom interactions such as role-playing. Kinesthetic and tactile learners enjoy movement and working with manipulative devices such as tangible objects, flash cards, and other hands-on materials used to make meaning from the world around them. These learners dislike sitting at their desk for too long and prefer to have frequent breaks in order to move around the classroom (Oxford, 2001). Learning styles are not dichotomous but, for the most part, operate on a continuum or continua that intersect at some point. For example, a person can be more equally visual and auditory but less kinesthetic and tactile (Oxford, 2001).

The next dimension of style deals with the “desired degree of generality.” In this case, learners can be viewed as global, holistic, or as analytic. Global students enjoy socially interactive and communicative situations where they can see the main idea. They feel at ease when they do not have all of the information needed and may tend to guess from words that surround other words, relying heavily on the use of context. Analytic students, on the other hand, concentrate on grammatical details and tend to avoid free-flowing communicative activities. They enjoy precision, and guessing is not their strength (Oxford, 2001).

Oxford (2001) emphasizes that individual learning styles and strategies can work together with—or conflict with—certain instructional practices. If there is agreement between the student’s learning style and strategy preferences and the method of instruction and its materials, then the student is likely to perform well and feel confident. If conflict occurs between the student's learning style and strategy preferences and the instructional method, the student often performs poorly and lacks confidence. For example, Sudzina (1993) found that most successful readers showed the highest match of individual reading styles with instructional practices. Also, the lowest scoring readers showed the greatest mismatch between preferred reading styles and the use of a single instructional method. Other studies (Dunn, 1990; Duhaney and Ewing, 1998) have shown that underachieving readers exhibited poor auditory and visual strengths and had primarily tactual and kinesthetic learning preferences and a global style (Carbo, Dunn, & Dunn, 1986). Average and effective readers tended to prefer tactual and kinesthetic stimuli significantly less than their underachieving counterparts (Duhaney and Ewing, 1998).

Matching reading method to learning style

Every reading strategy addresses specific modality and style preference for each individual learner. Since students have a variety of perceptual preferences there is not a single reading approach, strategy or activity that can prove to be wholly effective. It is a combination of all of these along with multi-tasking experiences that help students to comprehend information in a better manner. For example, pupils with developed auditory skills can decode words and recall them easily. For these learners, auditory phonics and linguistically oriented techniques work very well. On the other hand, visual learners who are able to remember words or sentences after seeing them a few times may tend to learn better through whole-word and individualized instructional methods (Carbo, Dunn & Dunn, 1986). In addition, language-experience approaches tend to help tactile learners "who learn by writing, touching, and tracing over words" (Carbo, Dunn & Dunn, 1986). When selecting a reading method, teachers should be aware of the approach involved: either global or analytic. Global reading methods include whole-word, individualized, language-experience and Fernald word-tracing. Analytic methods include the following: phonic, linguistic, Orton-Gillingham, which is a phonic method variation, and Glass-Analysis, a linguistic method variation. What is of utmost importance for teachers in this case is to understand the underlying premises for both of these approaches. Global approaches, for example, emphasize the whole story and they move from whole-to-parts. By contrast, analytic approaches consider small portions of information and, gradually, the information is processed step-by-step into conceptual labels found in sentences and eventually formulate full paragraphs. In other words, the student proceeds from a single phoneme to an entire thought. The phonic, Orton-Gillingham, and Glass Analysis methods work best to suit auditory/analytic learners; the whole word approach suits visual/global learners (Carbo, Dunn & Dunn, 1986). For a more detailed definition of each method, see Appendix A.

Activities and strategies to enhance comprehension

A more eclectic method is the multi-sensory approach or VAKT (visual, auditory, kinesthetic and tactile senses) whereby we see the information being presented through the integration of sensory activities (Moustafa, 1999). In other words, this particular strategy incorporates the learning style preferences for visual, auditory, kinesthetic and tactile learners, For example, in learning spelling the students may begin by saying the word, writing it out on a post-it or card, checking it, tracing the word, finding out the etymological derivations of the word as well as establishing a pattern for remembering the word, and repeating the entire process as is needed by the individual student.

Whatever method, strategy, or activity is used, the teacher should make sure that all four of the learning preferences are carefully addressed. To be successful, Carbo (1997) suggests the instructional method should be student-centered and constructivist in nature. Educators know that active learning is at the heart of all instruction.

Designing content-based activities to match learning styles

When designing classroom assignments, teachers should be aware of the individual learning differences among pupils. Therefore, a multi-sensory approach may seem to be more appropriate in all cases regardless of the student's background knowledge (Carbo, 1997; Moustafa, 1999). An example of this approach is Marie Carbo's Reading Styles Program, K–12, which offers a variety of materials for classroom use. For further information, visit this website: **http://www.nrsi.com//.**

Within a multi-sensory approach, classroom activities address different learning/reading styles such as visual, auditory, tactile, kinesthetic, global, and analytic. It is best therefore to address all six of these modalities, if possible. For example, a content-area reading passage may be presented through a recorded tape where the students listen to a story while they read it. In this manner they are working through two of the six modalities, auditory and visual. Following this experience, the teacher may want to check comprehension knowledge through a series of writing-activities. These activities can be targeted toward a global and/or analytic preference as well. Finally, in a culminating activity, a tactile-kinesthetic or hands-on event can follow where the students may draw, build maquettes, create flashcards, and pantomime or engage in personal dramatizations of their understanding of text information. In this manner, no single major literacy learning preference is left unaddressed.

Many more strategies and activities to enhance student learning by matching their learning style preferences to literacy tasks are supported in this manner. Through the use of grounded theory on learning styles and practical applications, teachers create activities that encompass

1) the need for students to engage in talk in-the classroom, 2) the need for students to pose questions, and 3) the need for students to make-sense and to

make meaning of methods, strategies, and activities in which they are asked to participate on a daily basis in urban schools.

The need for talk

Some students in elementary, middle, or high school are at the retelling stage. They often engage in discussion as a way to evaluate and reinforce their own understanding of what is being read and discussed. When discussion activities are avoided by students, it is usually because they do not sense a real purpose for participating in a talk activity. The auditory learner is more keen and comfortable in participating than the student who has difficulty communicating thoughts because of a language barrier or who is ease at speaking in front of others. Pairing students in mixed groups for retelling activities may include read-alouds of short expository or narrative passages and co-constructing text meaning. Students who are visual and auditory learners may want to read the short passage together and extend their knowledge as they embellish each other's retellings of text, making associations of related ideas, posing probing questions, and re-stating their ideas as they understand them. Oftentimes there may be a shift of ideas during their discussions, and they can feel a sense of fairness permeating their conversations. It is at this time that the teacher can capitalize on their interest and guide their discussions to higher levels of thought. If the students act as if they are boxed in a narrow conversation where they cannot connect to personal experience or where they are asked to regurgitate information, or even try to guess teacher expectations with regard to a closed discussion, they may more than likely want to avoid participating with others. The teacher may want to consider using a discussion web activity, for example, where the students are able to experience two sides of an interesting issue. Since the student has already understood the content through an auditory retelling activity he or she can extend comprehension of the text by visually noting how an idea fits logically on a T-chart, Venn diagram, or a simple visual representation of two sides of an issue on a discussion web.

An activity that allows students to explain what is going on in their own minds enables them to practice their divergent knowledge and skills by sharing their thinking with a partner. It is through this type of activity that the student engages in building background knowledge as well as using information that has been collaboratively pieced together in order to bridge the gap between what is known and what is unknown, as well as what is important and what is not. The teacher's classroom practice in a risk-taking environment places its emphasis on creating multi-sensory images to better student comprehension.

The need to pose questions

There are many different types of K-W-L's that address the need for students to organize content visually, in an auditory, and in a kinesthetic manner. These particular brainstorming strategies tap into the student's listening and speaking skills and ask the student to activate prior knowledge as well as explaining what is known about a particular topic. The second stage in most K-W-L activities allows the student to tell what has been learned through visual or auditory means. Finally, the last stage encourages students to write statements of learned information and in some cases to pose further questions to extend their thinking. During this final stage, it is the student who is asked to summarize what has been read. By using purpose-setting questions as guides, teachers and students are asked to embark in the self-construction as well as peer-construction of knowledge. In addition, the teacher can add key questions that will focus primarily on the author's intended meaning of the text. When using a Pic-a-Hole activity, for example, which is similar to using a series of cards with printed questions, each student is able to recognize the difference between two opposing questions. The activity can be simple by asking a straightforward question such as which phoneme is silent in the word "pneumonia," is it "p" or "n," and a more complex activity that may require a student to select a flat surface (plateau, cliff) during a lesson in Earth Science.

The teacher may choose to prompt the student by further using both divergent and convergent questions such as: *How are baleen whales and orca whales different?* and *What characteristics are shared by each?* In this manner, the students pinpoint what they feel is key information as the teacher adds, through a reciprocal stance, further questions to address key ideas that may not have occurred as important information to the student.

For kinesthetic learners, teachers can develop oddity tasks requiring students to choose a word, phrase, or statement that does not belong to the category being created. For example, electro-boards, open and closed sorting activities, and tactile sensory games can help students to determine what belongs together and what does not constitute an appropriate selection. The ability to categorize and classify conceptual terms, concepts, and ideas on the basis of their common elements is a higher order thinking skill that needs to be experienced by all students and that involves thinking and critically choosing the right kind of information. By asking students to physically sort objects, chute cards (cards which connect meaning to words) and conjoin words into sentences in literacy activities, the students can participate in meaning-making activities as they view iconic representations of words and symbols, individual letters to make words, and word chunks to make sense of what they are seeing and listening. In order to justify logically why and how they are categorizing and classifying information in a particular way, students need to be able to fully understand the information they are processing. Once again, by pairing students together or asking them to engage in free association of terms visually, auditorily, and kinesthetically while labeling and writing words, sentences, and paragraphs, students can understand more clearly the progression of the written word as it connects to the spoken word.

The need to sense clearly the purpose for reading and writing through meaning-making strategies and activities

In most schools, teachers organize and connect information by using direct and systematic approaches. Unfortunately, this is not enough for struggling readers and writers. Adolescent minority students in particular are often motivated to learn in order to reach a satisfactory level of cognitive and literacy development when they are taught through engaging teaching models. When these students perceive a shift in ideas or they experience conflicting information, it is through turn-taking activities, in a reciprocal manner with their teachers or peers, that they are able to clarify their own ideas. A model of instruction for middle school students that has built-in learning goals and objectives can be expressed in various modalities, collaborative and individual activities, and a connection to the real world.

Tactile and kinesthetic materials with game-like qualities enhance meaning-making because students not only enjoy creating and designing board games, learning circles, task and chute cards by way of a sound hands-on approach, but also because the materials are self-corrective. Materials designed by middle school students, for example, which are manipulated and moved, capitalize on a tertiary modality seldom experienced by minority students in urban settings. There is also project work that enhances vocabulary development and comprehension of text for minority students in urban settings. There is project work that enhances vocabulary development and comprehension for minority students in urban classrooms (Gunawardena, 1999). Task cards, according to Carbo, Dunn & Dunn (1986), may introduce or reinforce instructional information. An activity which includes the use of task cards may ask for joining antonyms or synonyms with a definition of a word to a word-label, for example. Unscrambling story information can also be done with the aid of task cards. Learning circles can be used to represent story grammar and story element. Each part of the circle can reveal the characters, setting, plot, and problem resolution to aid student text comprehension. Flip chutes designed with a particular theme or content area can motivate the student to learn and remember the new word since the student creates or designs the mnemonic device by illustrating or sketching word meaning to create his or her own correct definition to remember a particular word or concept.

Conclusion

Connecting student learning style modalities to reading comprehension enables minority adolescent students to participate in authentic school experiences. Learners benefit from these activities that match learning modalities if and when they connect to the individual's cultural, linguistic, and ideological experiences.

Classroom discussions and sensory activities dealing with the importance of what a word-concept stands for and why it is important for it to be understood by the student are critical areas that deeply impact reading comprehension. The listening-talk mode can serve to motivate minority students to integrate text context to their personal, familiar learning styles. When students find themselves in motivating, real-world situations, they will not only participate in these events, they will also help to create and generate metacognitive strategies to enhance their understanding of various topics under study. Through teacher modeling of auditory, visual, kinesthetic, and tactile activities and the demonstration and guidance of teacher-student creations of multi-sensory tasks, it is possible for all students to work alone or in pairs to effectively express their new modes of learning. Lastly, while it is true that understanding each student's learning style or modality preference is a way to maximize literacy and language learning, teachers should remember to use or continue to use strategies and activities that promote talk, creativity, meta-language, inter-language discussions in addition to visual representations to accompany text materials and tactile renditions created through the development and use of student artifacts.

APPENDIX A

Analytic reading method*s*

Phonic method

In this method, the student learns individual letter sounds. These letter sounds are later blended to form words. After more letter sounds are learned, students begin to decipher more complex words. Students typically work in whole-class groups or smaller groups, learning letter sounds, building towards more complex word forms, and independently decoding words while reading in the classroom (Carbo, Carbo and Dunn 1986, p.67).

Variation of the phonic method: Orton-Gillingham method

The Orton-Gillian method addresses auditory/tactile/analytic learning styles. Using this multi-sensory approach, students learn individual letter sounds in a controlled and sequential fashion. The letter is shown to the child and paired with the sound the letter represents. The child traces over the letter and writes the letter (Carbo, Carbo and Dunn 1986, p.72).

Linguistic method

Students address patterns of words rather than individual letter sounds. Groups of words are introduced to the student (e.g., bat, cat, sat, fat). Words are then grouped together to form simple sentence structures. Students decode new words based on the students' understanding of the word patterns (Carbo, Carbo and Dunn 1986, p.67).

Variation of the linguistic method: Glass-analysis method

This method teaches students to decode words based on clusters of letters that exist within words (e.g., in crab, the clusters are cr and ab).Through auditory and visual training, the student is shown the patterns of clusters and the sounds they make. The student looks at and listens to a word, hears the clusters of sounds within the word. The student then says the letters that make up those sounds. Cluster sounds of the word are shared with the student and the student is asked to pronounce them (Carbo, Carbo and Dunn 1986, p.72).

Global reading methods

Whole word method

Students are exposed to new words before they are introduced in story form. New words are taught to the student using flash cards or word lists. The students practice the word by looking at them, listening to them being spoken, and repeating them until they are able to recognize them quickly in a reading passage. This method is usually employed in a group setting (Carbo, Carbo and Dunn 1986, p.73).

Individualized method

The individualized method stresses independent reading exercises that are not group or teacher focused. Typically a student would select a reading of particular interest. This reading can take the form of a book, magazine, or other student selected medium. The student then reads quietly away from the distraction of others. This method emphasizes reading comprehension, quiet reading skills, and reading for enjoyment. The teacher acts as a facilitator, providing an environment for reading and evaluating student reading comprehension (Carbo, Carbo and Dunn 1986, p.74).

Language-experience method

Teachers work with students to create student stories. The students create pictures of experiences they have had, and the teacher writes a few sentences about the picture, based on the student's narrative. This allows for association between spoken and written words. After field trips or other shared group experiences, students dictate to the teacher their individual experiences, which later become integrated in a classroom storyboard. After the experience of interacting with teacher and students and developing a working vocabulary, students then begin to write their own simple stories, independent of their teachers, about experiences they have had (Carbo, Carbo and Dunn 1986, p.76).

Variation of the language-experience method: Fernald word-tracing method

The Fernald Word-Tracing method reinforces word learning by incorporating a tactile component. When students encounter a word that they cannot spell, the teacher writes the word on a card in crayon, forming raised surfaces. The student then traces over the word while saying it aloud. After repeating the tracing step several times, the student turns the card over and writes the word from memory. When the student finishes a story, the teacher will type it out and place the typed version below the student's handwritten version. The student then reads the typed story to help associate written and typed words (Carbo, Carbo and Dunn 1986, p.80).

Method addressing individual reading styles and interests

The Carbo recorded-book method

This method is useful in teaching those students who may not be persistent, responsible motivated learners and who need structure and stability. The Recorded-Book method is specifically useful to those students with global and visual learning styles. Students utilize a wide variety of storybooks of varying degrees of difficulty that have been recorded in small sections. The student can see the word on the page while hearing the word on tape. This interactive learning method allows students to experience the written word in the correct pace, phrasing and expression, facilitating fewer reading errors (Carbo, Carbo and Dunn 1986, p.83).

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7
The Development of Higher Order Thinking Skills in FLED Professional Development

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The establishment of a wide range of higher-level foreign language teaching and learning programs in recent years points to the importance of the development of Superior-level language abilities in FLED (Foreign Language Education). This presentation reviews the nature of these abilities and the professional development options currently available that make the achievement of them possible.

Most foreign language (FL) educators would accept as axiomatic the statement that FL education programs in the U.S. provide a level of instruction up to but rarely surpassing Advanced High on the ACTFL proficiency scale. Given the limited role that second language (L2) education occupies in the overall U.S. educational system, we simply to not have the structures in place to meet current language learning and teaching demands at higher levels of proficiency, let alone those projected for the immediate future. Indeed, the vast majority of our FL teaching resources are spent on first-time, low-level language learners in high school and college. Simply put, far too few Americans study languages other than English (LOTEs) for a sufficient period of time to attain any truly functional level of proficiency as defined by the competencies required for public and professional L2 usage (Brecht, 2001, p. xi). Nevertheless, recognition of the importance of promoting more fully developed L2 abilities beyond the interpersonal sphere of language usage has been gaining ground in recent years in governmental as well as educational circles.

FL programs that promote Superior-level language abilities are in their infancy. Indeed, it has been stated that the teaching of Superior-level skills is virgin territory, with few attempting to develop programs and teach at this level. Consequently, “there are more questions than answers, more theory than practice, and more anecdote than research in this area” (Leaver & Shekhtman, 2002, p. 32). With that said, what is the nature of existing programs and the language abilities that they promote, and how might we in higher education (HE) more adequately disseminate that knowledge so as to begin to infuse what is known about them into our own FL and teacher education programs? Currently, L2 programs in HE typically establish a minimum of Advanced-Low proficiency as the desired goal for our students. The most recent ACTFL Program Standards for the Preparation of Foreign Language Teachers require Advanced-Low proficiency in speaking and writing for a number of the more commonly taught languages in U.S. FL programs. Based on years of teaching and learning experience at the HE level, this has been established as the most reasonable expectation of proficiency given the short duration of the FL experience that most of our students receive (Shrum & Gleason, 2000, p. 175). Those students who do progress to higher levels of L2 proficiency usually do so on their own, with little or no formal guidance. Accordingly, we must look elsewhere, primarily outside of HE for the majority of established models of language teaching that promote the Superior levels of language knowledge and usage.

The federal government's need for very high levels of language proficiency for foreign service personnel has been the primary impetus for Superior-level teaching and learning research. Language and culture programs at a variety of locales, including the Defense Language Institute, the Foreign Service Institute (see Ehrman, Stryker, 1997), and the Monterey Institute of International Studies (see Angelelli & Degueldre) have focused on addressing the linguistic and cultural needs of Americans who represent the U.S. around the world and for whom Superior levels of linguistic and cultural knowledge are requirements for employment and in many cases, subsequent advancement (see Leaver, B. L. & Shekhtman, B., 2002a). These institutes utilize the Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) scale from which the ACTFL scale was subsequently adapted. The ILR measures language proficiency on a scale of 0-5, with 3 equating to the Superior level on the ACTFL scale. As the ACTFL scale has been established to address proficiency levels more traditionally associated with language learning within the context of HE, it makes more detailed distinctions at the lower levels of proficiency associated with novice, intermediate, and advanced learners. The ILR, on the other hand, goes beyond the ACTFL scale an additional two levels, accounting for the finer distinctions of language abilities within the public and professional spheres that are absolutely essential for high level governmental work in foreign affairs.

The language teaching programs developed and implemented throughout these governmental agencies have routinely led to significant advances in language proficiency across a number of languages, including Arabic, Chinese, English as a Second Language (taught in Denmark), French, German, Spanish, and Russian, some specifically focusing on advancing from ILR 2 to 3, others bridging from ILR 3 (general professional proficiency) to level 4 (advanced professional proficiency), a particularly challenging and time consuming task. All of these programs have three essential components in common. First is extensive explicit target language instruction. Secondly, considerable time is spent in target language environments, typically abroad. Finally, the language learners demonstrate a strong desire and drive to continue to further their language development outside of formal instructional situations by means of self-regulated learning.

The first component serves in stark contrast to the communicative proficiency oriented approaches to FL teaching that dominate current U.S. trends because concepts that have been shown to be effective at lower levels of language development, surprisingly, have proved ineffective at the higher levels. Considerable time is spent in courses designed to promote the development of Superior levels of language ability attending to earlier lower-level teaching techniques that have retarded or served as deterrents to developing the highest levels of proficiency. The focus on doing rather than knowing at the lower levels of FL teaching has led to significant gaps in knowledge and skills essential at the upper levels. As a result, considerable time and effort is spent on remedial work, addressing issues of fossilization, overuse of compensation strategies, and limited experience with authentic materials, text types, and culture (Leaver & Shekhtman, 6).

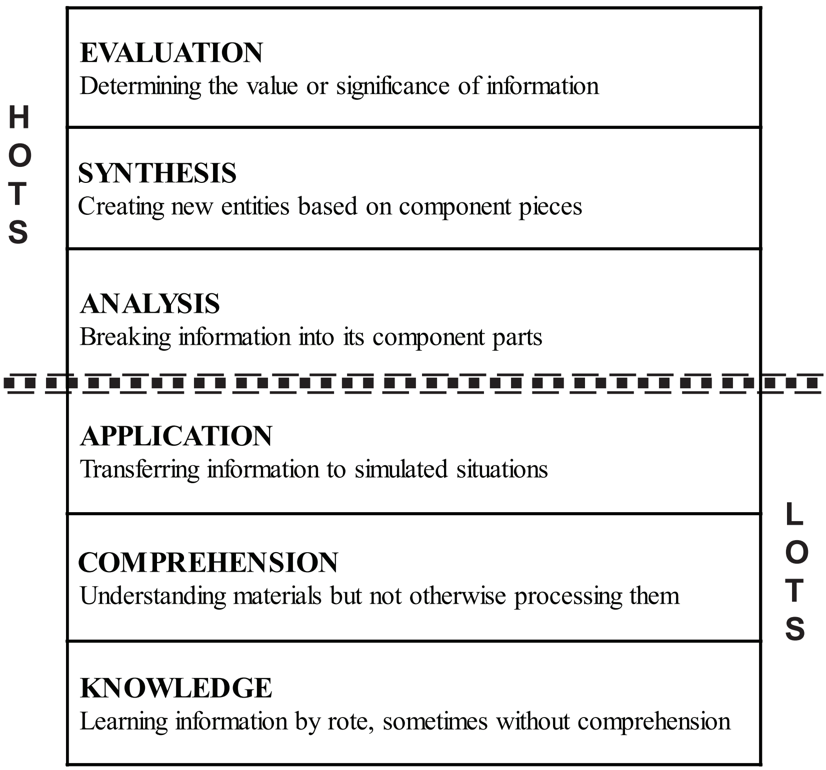
Multicultural experiences are essential for developing the sociolinguistic and sociocultural competencies required at the Superior level. In one study, 100% of participants enrolled in a program leading to ILR 4 indicated various kinds of multicultural experiences before the age of 20, including growing up in multilingual families or communities. Most also traveled abroad regularly, had worked abroad, or were married to native speakers of their L2 (Leaver & Atwell, 2002, p. 271). Clearly, time spent in country or in alternative contexts where L2 language usage is commonplace is a necessity. To what extent, i.e., for how long and in what contexts, remains to be seen.

The third component centers on learner self-regulation, the foundation for learner autonomy. The ability to monitor one's own learning and to continue to do so on one's own upon completion of formal language training are common elements that successful Superior-level language learners have mastered (Ehrman, 2002, p. 255-257). This theme will reappear shortly under the guise of Significant Learning.

The conscientious decision to include the term Higher Order Thinking Skills in the title of this presentation was twofold. First, it is a concept most in HE are familiar with, and, perhaps more importantly, profess to incorporate on a regular basis into their instructional interactions with students. Secondly, I would like to expand upon its more traditional definition in order to explicitly incorporate superior-level linguistic and content knowledge into the paradigm: superior cognitive abilities are dependent upon correspondingly superior levels of linguistic knowledge and content knowledge. This concept appears repeatedly in published accounts of program design for meeting the needs of Superior-level language learners (Leaver & Shekhtman, 2002; Byrnes, 2002). Successful programs that promote Superior levels of language ability systematically cite the essential characteristic of the incorporation and infusion of both language

and content for ultimate attainment of high levels of proficiency. We will return to this topic later, within the context of FL teaching, after first reviewing Bloom's Taxonomy and a recent expansion of that taxonomy.
of the more generally accepted ineffectiveness of more traditional teaching techniques and styles, a new relational and interactive Taxonomy of Significant Learning (SL) has been developed by Fink (2003) and is displayed here in Figure 2.

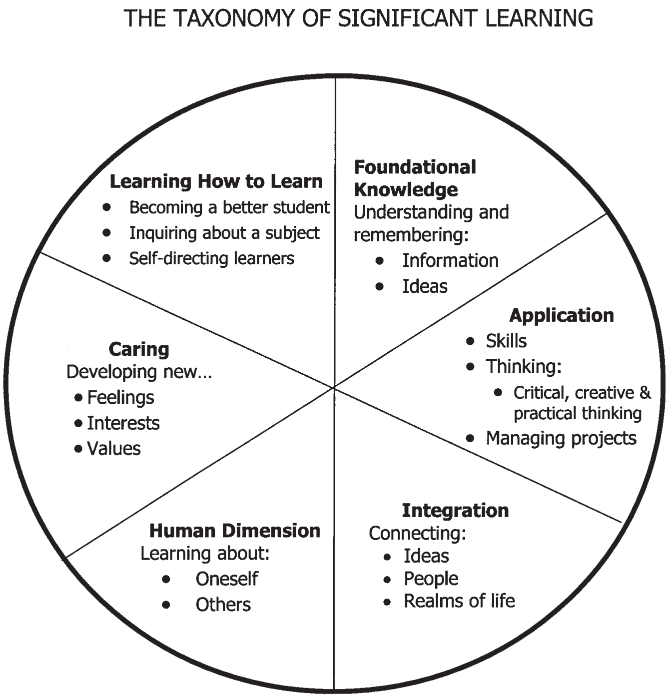
FIGURE 1 - BLOOM'S TAXONOMY OF EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES



In Figure 1 we see the traditional taxonomy of education objectives that have guided a significant amount of educational theory and practice within the realm of cognitive development for over five decades, with the distinction between Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS), the more complex levels, and Lower Order Thinking Skills (LOTS) and the associated less complex abilities.

In response to the need to address additional kinds of learning not originally addressed in Bloom's classic hierarchical taxonomy, and in light

FIGURE 2 – FINK'S TAXONOMY OF SIGNIFICANT LEARNING



Fink, Dee. (2003). *Creating Significant Learning Experiences: An Integrated Approach to Designing College Courses.* Used by permission.

SL maintains that to promote learning for lifelong development and relevance, for example, to go beyond simple memorization and application learning, we must go beyond the classical characterization expressed by Bloom. In order to help learners retain information, to transfer that knowledge successfully to new situations, to develop thinking or problem solving skills, and to achieve affective outcomes such as motivation for additional learning or change in attitude, we must break with traditional teaching modes, specifically, lecturing, and embrace a wide variety of learner and learning centered approaches. Among the key concepts in the SL model is that of self-directing learners (a deliberate active focus by Fink rather than the passive *self-directed* term). Within this framework, the learner is highly motivated to learn, to take responsibility for his/her learning, and to seek the means to continue to learn. SL has both a process and an outcome dimension as learners are thoroughly and intimately engaged in their learning; as a result they will experience a significant change in perspective that is lasting.

A number of FL teaching philosophies and approaches have been developed over the past two decades within HE to address issues of the development and utilization of higher levels of proficiency in formal academic settings and teacher training. One such approach, Content-Based Instruction (CBI), has been demonstrated to be quite successful in other areas, most notably English as a Second Language and bilingual education, but its incorporation into FL teaching continues to lag behind. CBI is based on the premise that the L2 can be meaningfully used from day one and that language and content are inherently intertwined (Stryker & Leaver, 1997, Leaver & Stryker 1989). An innovative FL application of this philosophy in HE can be found in Languages Across the Curriculum (LAC), a nation-wide effort to integrate the teaching of languages other than English (LOTEs) into the content areas of a number of disciplines throughout the college curriculum (Shoenberg & Turlington). Successful LAC programs are found in a number of universities and colleges, across a variety of languages, and address numerous concerns in FL education at the higher levels of proficiency. At the same time, they present new and significant challenges to FL faculty, their colleagues in other disciplines, and the administrative bureaucracies innate to HE. But it is a separate issue altogether that more routinely limits the development of higher levels of language proficiency in HE and one whose existence falls entirely within the domain of FL departments themselves, that of the persistent and problematic dichotomy that characterizes most FL programs in U.S. higher education, the traditional split between language learning and content learning.

While novice and intermediate-level courses typically identify language-specific goals for the learner, at higher levels, where culture, linguistics and literature courses predominate, they rarely factor them into syllabus and course design (Byrnes, 2002a, p. 34). While FL professionals would overwhelmingly acknowledge as fact, both intuitively and based on experience in and out of the classroom environment, that language learners in upper-level "content" courses do indeed continue to develop their L2 language skills as they advance through the sequence of course requirements for their program, there is typically no pedagogical treatment given to promoting further language development. Stryker & Leaver (1997, p. 7) have examined this split and its consequences, and have stated, rather poignantly, the following:

> Unfortunately, this artificial separation between language instruction and subject-matter classes remains an obstacle in many, if not most, FL settings. The reasons stem from a combination of cultural factors—insular social values, a lack of perceived need for integration of language and content, old teaching habits based on false assumptions, and an educational bureaucracy mired in the past. While research and experience indicate the advantages of a content-driven curriculum in FL classrooms, teachers' unfamiliarity with L2 acquisition processes reinforces false assumptions, such as the idea that the study of language equates to the study of grammar, that meaning should be communicated through translation, that the

> study of culture equates to the study of literature, or that students must be "fluent" before they are ready to study real content.

When we consider language learning and content learning as skills to be developed simultaneously, rather than sequentially, the resulting abilities and knowledge are seen as synergistic, meaningful, and lasting. In order to broaden our FL programs, and specifically with regards to teacher training, in concept and in practice, we must overcome the traditional split between language and content courses, redesign our curricular sequences, reconfigure roles of teachers and students, consider alternative and innovative sources of information, and establish optimal learning environments and formats, be they via formal classroom instruction, in-country experiences through study, travel or work, or by means of a multitude of distance learning modalities (Byrnes, 2001; Kramsch, 1995).

An additional concern among FL teacher preparation programs and among the students themselves is that many FL teachers have not reached functional levels of proficiency by the time they complete their undergraduate studies. As a profession, we in FL must foster the development of a profound understanding of the ongoing nature of language proficiency, continues to support it throughout the lower levels of proficiency usually associated with the undergraduate experience, and strive to provide the means for continued language development afterwards, to transform our focus from such a predominant emphasis on preservice training to one in which lifelong professional development is key. Further development of FL teachers' language skills across all modalities as they progress from limited professional proficiency towards advanced professional proficiency, as well as across the curriculum in terms of content, then, become of prime importance in graduate programs and on-going professional development (Glisan & Phillips, 1989; Guntermann, 1992; Phillips, 1991).

It is time for FL programs to raise the bar, not simply to aim for higher levels of proficiency, but to provide the means to achieve them as well, to give real meaning to the interpretive and presentational modes of expression. In order to do so we must go beyond the introductory communicative modes of instruction that place considerable emphasis on a wide range of skills and reintegrate a level of knowledge that is both broader and deeper than that commonly found in our FL courses at present.

Some have asserted that attainment of Superior-level abilities is possible in the U.S. due to large numbers of heritage language learners. Perhaps this is true, but we are also in the initial stages of heritage language curriculum development, and while we must foster the continued language enrichment of this particular population, we must not forget those students from other language backgrounds, who, for whatever personal motivation, have chosen to study an L2 later in life and seek to attain functional levels of proficiency.

We, as a profession, need to continue to build upon the goals and philosophies expressed in the ACTFL *Standards for Foreign Language*

Learning: Preparing for the 21st Century. We need to establish language-specific standards in order to provide a more detailed and comprehensive road map for teachers and students so that they can adequately understand what basic knowledge and skills are required at each consecutive level of language study. Moreover, establishing these standards will enable us to delineate the cultural and linguistic content crucial to the development of cognitively challenging courses and coursework that will lead to Superior-level abilities. Such a road map would generate a clear goal for students and serve to provide opportunities for interdisciplinary and intradisciplinary interactions as content and language are brought together in meaningful ways. Last, but certainly not least, it would stimulate truly significant learning by prompting and promoting the higher order thinking skills of all involved.

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8

Wie im Bilderbuch…? Reflections of Cultural Changes in Contemporary German Children's Books

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When viewing a breathtaking landscape or experiencing a gorgeous sunset, Germans are often moved to exclaim: "Wie im Bilderbuch" [just like in a picture book]. This idiomatic phrase associates scenes or experiences that are beautiful, carefree, or seemingly perfect with the world depicted in picture books. While this nostalgic association may have been true for German picture books of the past, it seems no longer applicable to many of the books currently on the market. Instead of presenting an idyllic world, contemporary books intend to inform children about the social reality of their world and therefore do not shy away from including the dark side of life. For this reason, these books are of great interest to foreign language teachers as they provide a rich resource to explore cultural beliefs and values.

In this article, I will argue for the inclusion of picture books in foreign language curricula for the purpose of studying cultural similarities and differences. Schwarcz (1991, p. 10) notes that "any society educates its young generation toward common values, attitudes, and behavior patterns, for society's and the individual's mutual benefit." Since picture books are designed to impart to the very young those values that are dear to the society, they are a treasure trove for such investigations. I will demonstrate that many contemporary picture books no longer present children with an idealized picture of the world far removed from their own reality; rather, they confront them with the vicissitudes of modern urban life in an effort to give them strength to deal with the problems of their own everyday world. I will first give a brief historical background, then discuss the nature of picture books, in particular the relationship between text and illustration, which will be followed by suggestions for teaching these books in foreign language classes. In the last portion, I will introduce a number of current German picture books dealing with social, political and historical issues. It is my hope that foreign language teachers will be encouraged to use illustrated children's books in their classes for their own and their students' benefit and enjoyment.

Historical background

The existence of children's literature is a function of a nation's economic, political, and cultural situation because it depends on an infrastructure that supports a high level of literacy, educational institutions, government support, and a population with large enough disposable income to purchase books for private use (Stan, 1999, p. 168). Germany has had a long tradition of producing books specifically written for children. However, the reasons for writing for the young have changed significantly over time as they reflect political, philosophical, and pedagogical changes in society. A large number of books from the Middle Ages to the 20th century were designed to train the young for their future roles as members of the German patriarchal community. Emphasis was placed on the virtues of religious devotion, obedience, cleanliness, and order, and the books illustrated in detail the consequences of a child's disregard for these values. Depicting the *heile Welt* (rosy, cozy world) was intended to give children a *Schonraum* (protected space) where they could assimilate these values while being protected from the harsh realities of life.

The picture-perfect quality of children's books changed dramatically in the early 70s, which was due to the anti-authoritarian movements of the 70s and a newly emerging concept of the child. Instead of the romantic notions of the child and childhood, which Rousseau had propagated, the child was now seen as an equal partner with adults and therefore needed to be introduced to all aspects of life in order to be prepared for active participation in society. The child was to be given an equal voice (*ein Mitsprache- und Mitbestimmungsrecht*) in the new non-hierarchical family and in family discussions. As a consequence, the functions of children's books changed drastically. No longer was the didactic intention to prepare children for obedient citizenship and affirmation of the *status quo*; rather, books were to train the child for active participation in an imperfect society that could and should be changed through active political engagement. Children's books were to confront children with the harsh realities of the adult world, train them to view problems critically and help them find possible solutions for the deficits and conflicts in their own lives. Ewers (1995, p. 20) contends that this new *Literatur des Daseinsernstes* (literature of the serious side of existence) opened up a whole new field of topics that had hitherto been taboo in children's literature. Mirroring social reality, the new topics included dysfunctional family relationships, illness, suicide, drug use, mental retardation, physical handicaps, sexuality, violence in schools, discrimination of minority groups, destruction of the environment, war, and even the Holocaust. The removal of taboos continued in the 90s, and the so-called *problemorientierte Literatur* became a major component in the offerings of children's books. While there are still many children's books on the market that are primarily intended to entertain (fairy tales, fantastic tales, comics, classic stories), it is these *problemorientierte* books that are ideal venues for foreign language teachers to use in their classrooms for culture studies.

The nature of picture books

Picture books are written for pre-school and elementary school children who are not yet proficient readers and thus need illustrations to support the text and adult mediators who read the words and offer explanations and interpretations of text and picture. Serving a dual audience, the naïve child and the sophisticated adult, means that good picture books can be read and enjoyed on several levels.

It is a mistake to assume that pictures merely serve the text by showing visually what the verbal story tells. Verbal information and visual communication are different media and operate in different ways. While the verbal narrative tells the story in a linear fashion in progressive time, the picture represents a moment in time and freezes it in space. Illustrator s thus are the first interpreters of the text. It is they who decide what moment to select, what to omit and what to emphasize, and what else they want to add to fill the empty spaces on the page.

Pictures are an integral part of the book, and it is the relationship between word and picture that makes picture books unique. Text and illustration depend on each other for interpretation and meaning. Schwarcz (1991, p. 5) notes that " an illustration—whether it be simply decorative or descriptive in the sense that it repeats what the text tells, or narrative in the sense that it interprets—reaches beyond the text and may even contradict it. Any illustration either interacts with the text or interferes with it." The pleasure for adult readers is to discover how these two levels interact with one another. "The tension between the two functions creates unlimited possibilities for interaction between word and image in a picture book" (Nikolajeva, p. 2), and readers take delight in the third kind of story that emerges from the interplay.

To illustrate the interactive relationship between text and picture, a few examples of the *problemorientierte* picture books may suffice. *Soooo viele Kinder* is a picture book for pre-school children with minimal reading ability. The first double spread shows a cross-section of a multi-family house that is subdivided into 13 small rooms. The text picks out only six children and their situation (i.e., Lars and Sofia visit their friend Simon who had an accident), but the picture shows the two friends entertaining Simon with a self-made puppet theater production. In the text, no mention is made of the parents, but the visual images show a father feeding his children and attending to the needs of his sick wife; in another picture a mother is depicted working on a computer. Other scenes (like a graphic one in the bathroom) are not commented on but left for children to discover and discuss with their parents or Kindergarten teachers.

In *Opas Engel*, the words and pictures tell two different stories. While the protagonist, a dying grandfather, narrates his life's story to his grandson, the illustrations contradict his tale by showing the reader what really happened. The juxtaposition of the two tales not only makes for a much richer text, it also creates irony and humor, which even young children can appreciate.

Judith und Lisa is about the friendship of two girls, one of whom is Jewish, during the Third Reich in Germany. While the text strives to explain in simple sentences the complexity of the social and political events of the past, the illustrations focus on the daily lives of the girls, their friendship and their feelings (i.e., going to school, playing with their teddy bears). However, in the background of this private sphere the illustrator added significant symbols that tie the pictures to the text and relate the personal story to the larger historical context. A boot entering the picture stands for the marching troops of the Brownshirts, the little pile of burning books represents the book burnings carried out by the Nazis, and the smashed window of a Jewish store recalls the *Kristallnacht* of 1938. Using pictorial symbols, the illustrator is not only able to connect the two spheres, she can also show visually the impact these events have on the friendship of the two girls and therefore reach the affective level of the reader.

Another excellent example of a book in which the pictures not only elaborate and enhance the story but also contradict the narrative is *Rosa Weiss*. It tells the story of a little German girl in a small German town in the 30s who resists the town's complicity with the Nazis and pays for it with her life. Early in the story, the narrator tells the reader that Rosa goes for walks along the river and loves to see the sky reflected in the water. The picture shows the scene, but in addition to the sky the reader sees the barbed wire fence in the reflection. This contradicts the carefree walks in open spaces because it points to the boundaries that fence her in and others out. Later when Rosa discovers the concentration camp filled with hungry children, the reader sees again the barbed wire fence, but this time it is much higher and is connected to heavy wooden masts with electrical insulators standing out menacingly in the foreground. In front of the fence is the snow-covered ground with dog prints. While the text merely refers to the children as being hungry, the reader can see them freezing and scared behind the electrified fence. The dog prints (nowhere mentioned in the text) serve as a reminder that not only are the children being guarded by ferocious dogs, but they also show symbolically the reversal of the normal world. Here the animals run free while human beings are caged behind barbed wire fences.

All of these examples show that the narrative text tells only part of the story and that "pictures make explicit the information unspoken by the text" (Nodelman, 1988, p. 1). Pictures are particularly effective and efficient because they can create an entire context around the characters. Simultaneously, they also appeal to the reader's intellectual curiosity, his affective domain, and his aesthetic sense . Yet it is in the interaction between the words and the pictures that the complete story emerges and "allows the reader to come away with more than the sum of the parts" (Kiefer, 1995, p. 6).

Reading picture books in the foreign language classroom

Authentic children's books are ideal resources for foreign language students and teachers. To begin with, they are user-friendly because the texts tend to be short (only a few paragraphs per page) and easier linguistically. Most of the vocabulary is derived from current everyday usage, and since it is repeated frequently, it can be "absorbed" painlessly by foreign language students rather than being overtly learned via exercises or drills. Grammatically, these narratives are often less complicated because they avoid convoluted sentence structures and tense changes. They are usually told in the present or simple past tense, employ main clauses with some dependent clauses (relative clauses and *weil* sentences to explain causal relationships), and frequently include many adjectives, modals, and prepositional phrases.

Also, since the story focuses on one major character, the plot line is less sophisticated than in adult novels. There are fewer characters, no subplots, and no time shifts, which make for easier access. The story is usually told in brief episodes that follow one another in chronological order. Dialog and action predominate and propel the story forward. Cause and effect relationships can easily be discerned as the characters tend to be less complicated. While the lack of sophistication may run the risk of lack of literary merit, it is a great aid for foreign language students with limited language proficiency who can easily follow the story line.

As noted before, the illustrations are of tremendous value to foreign language students because they present the familiar and thus lower the affective filter. Our students are competent decoders of visual images since they have grown up in a world replete with visual signs. Many of our students are also visual learners and need pictures to organize and retain knowledge and information. All students benefit because pictures have a strong visual impact and elicit emotional responses. They reach not only the head, but the heart as well and are therefore also a great source of pleasure for the reader.

One of the greatest advantages of using picture books in the foreign language classroom is the opportunity to study cultural differences. "Reading" the pictures allows students to extrapolate values and beliefs of the culture. They can draw conclusions from what is shown, how it is depicted, and what relationships are established between the various parts of the picture, even from what is left out. "In other words, it is not just the objects depicted in art that bear cultural meanings; the ways in which they are depicted do so also." (Nodelman, 1988, p. 12). Nodelman goes on to say that in order to understand pictures correctly, the viewers need to have a "knowledge of learned competencies and cultural assumptions" (p. 17) lest they misunderstand the embedded message. This means that even though our students are familiar with decoding visual images, they may misconstrue the meaning because they lack cultural background knowledge. Teachers play a vital role by providing necessary cultural information and by helping students integrate visual details into the larger cultural context. With practice, students will quickly gain competence in decoding visual images of the foreign country and thus increase their cultural awareness and proficiency.

In spite of these numerous advantages, there are some practical disadvantages to working with children's books in the classroom. Picture books are expensive, are quickly out of print, and lack ready-made teaching materials. The reasons for the first two problems are that children's books are part of the mass market and, therefore, depend on public appeal and corporate profitability. They are expensive to produce because the writer and the illustrator need to be paid. In addition, producing sturdy books with colored pictures is a much more costly undertaking than printing paperback books without illustrations. However, disadvantages are ameliorated by the fact that the books once bought will last for a long time. Also, if they are out of print, they can be purchased through the *Antiquariat* (used book stores on line). The lack of didactisized materials is a real problem but it can be minimized if teachers share the materials that they have developed (perhaps on the web site for *Kinder- und Jugendliteratur*). The advantages of using picture books clearly outweigh the minor drawbacks of procuring and preparing them for the classroom. Working with these books provides our students an unforgettable reading experience.

Teaching strategies for picture books in the classroom

No matter how valuable or usable a text may be, students will not want to work with it unless it is presented in a manner that they enjoy. This is even more true for children's literature as students (and many teachers) harbor pre-conceived notions about this genre. They think that "kiddie lit," a term often used pejoratively to trivialize and disqualify these texts, is inferior to adult literature and therefore has no place in a rigorous academic curriculum (Moffit, 1998, p. 118). It is of utmost importance that teachers take time to inform their students about the nature of children's literature and about the purpose for reading it in the foreign language classroom. Students need to know that children's books are authentic documents of a culture and were written to inculcate the young with values and beliefs that dominant society supports.

The reason for studying these books in the foreign language classroom is not to condescend to the students; rather, it is to give them the opportunity to extrapolate embedded ideological inscriptions in order to increase their cultural understanding of the countries whose languages they are studying.

Equally important are the strategies employed by the teacher to "read" these books with adult students. In order to make it a positive experience, it is advisable that teachers approach these texts differently than they do the reading passages in the textbook. Beginning with the physical set-up, the room should be darkened in order to minimize distractions. The teacher should face the students who are sitting comfortably in semi-circles. It is important that all students can hear and see clearly. Therefore, it is recommended that the teacher act as a story teller who dramatizes the tale while students listen and look at the (large) illustrations on the overhead or slide projector. In order to achieve a smooth reading, teachers may want to present a few advanced organizers, but they should limit themselves to the most essential ones (i.e., a brief review of past tense forms or cultural/historical background information) lest the students lose interest in the story to come. The first reading should focus entirely on getting the meaning across. Therefore the teacher should read portions of the text in an animated manner stopping frequently to reiterate the story line and discussing the corresponding illustrations. Using a laser pointer, the teacher can guide students to notice details and elicit comments on the visual representation of the text, thus incorporating new vocabulary into the students' existing semantic repertoire. Pausing for a brief discussion of the illustration serves also another purpose: it heightens awareness and creates tension as the "drama of the turned page" unfolds (Kiefer, 1995, p. 6).

Even though most children's books are not very long and therefore can be read in one class period, it is preferable to stretch the reading out over two or three periods. Students' attention spans (even in college) wane after a short period of time, and they lose interest. In addition, students need time to digest the story and to relate to it on a personal level. Therefore, it is a good idea to divide the story into short episodes and give students assignments that help them understand the story better. Homework tasks should include higher level thinking skills (i.e., "Why do you think the protagonist acted in this way? What would you have done if you had been in his or her shoes? What possible reasons could you give for the behavior of the other children? How will the story continue? What would be a realistic, but satisfying conclusion?"). Involving students in the story and letting them make predictions enhance their interest and enjoyment of the text.

A subsequent reading needs to focus on more details and interpretation. Instead of asking students "What do you see in the picture?," the teacher could ask them "Why did the artist choose to draw this scene? What was important to the artist? What has been left out? Why?" This approach not only will help students extract information for new interpretations, it also helps students appreciate the art of the illustrator. They learn that pictures are not merely visual representations of verbal narratives; rather, they are an artist's interpretation that elaborates, interferes, and sometimes purposely contradicts the text. Gaining appreciation and respect for the aesthetic dimensions of children's books is a worthy goal for our students to develop.

At the end of the readings, it is imperative that there be a discussion about the whole book. Students should be asked to comment on the writer's intentions, the appropriateness of the text for specific age levels, the readers' possible reactions, the relationship between the social problems presented in this work of fiction vs. those found in social reality, the values and beliefs embedded in the text, and comparisons to similar social issues in the US. Then students will see reading children's books as a legitimate part of an academic undertaking and approve of it.

Contemporary picture books with social issues

Second year German college textbooks currently on the market are designed, in part, to introduce students to social, political, and historical issues of the culture. Generally, each chapter is divided into a prose text, which provides background knowledge about the particular topic, and a literary text, which relates to the topic in some fashion. Students often do not care for these literary excerpts because they are taken out of context (what Kast calls *Häppchenliteratur*), contain complicated structures and much unknown vocabulary. Even when provided with sidebar glosses and encouraging words (i.e., "don't worry if you do not understand every word"), students often are frustrated and sometimes develop an antipathy towards German literature. A good way to counteract this is to replace some of the literary excerpts with picture books. Since they are short, complete in themselves, and comprehensible even for students with limited language proficiency, they better serve the purpose of informing students about particular social issues. Fortunately, there are picture books on almost every conceivable topic on the market, and therefore it is not difficult to find suitable books for use in the classroom. In the next section, I will discuss a number of picture books that deal with topics frequently found in German second year college textbooks and that I have used successfully with my students in second and third year language courses.

The family (traditional vs. modern)

Struwwelpeter and *Die Häschenschule* are excellent examples of patriarchal value systems. Although originally published in 1844 and 1924 respectively, they are still best sellers today and enjoy large numbers of reprints. This is surprising as many educators today think that they are harmful to children. Miller (1983) considers such books examples of *Schwarze Pädagogik* (poisonous pedagogy) because they were written to train children for absolute obedience, willing subordination, and conformity. In *Die Häschenschule*, obedience, cleanliness, order, and working hard are taught and practiced at home and in school while *Struwwelpeter* teaches these values by demonstrating the catastrophic consequences of rebelling against them.

In contrast to these traditional family relationships, in *Ein richtig schöner Tag* the modern family and is depicted realistically and humorously. This family copes with the daily demands, complications, and stresses of modern family life. Instead of the traditional hierarchical structure, this book depicts a modern egalitarian family which.emphasizes the needs of people rather than the training for punctuality, order, and duty. Here the parents love each other and their children, look after them together, and place great emphasis on family togetherness. Because the mother had left early to prepare the picnic in the garden, the father now has to cope with all the problems that ensue. Rather than the clumsy, inept father of sitcoms, he does what needs to be done. In spite of mishaps, in the end everybody is satisfied and considers it a beautiful day.

While this book depicted a happy, well adjusted family, there are many books that feature social problems of modern urban life and its effects on the family, especially on children. Unemployment is the topic of *Mein Papa hat was verloren*. The father, a dental technician, lost his job at the lab and now can stay home all day. Initially, the young son enjoys being able to play with him for hours and going with him to the zoo, but soon he is affected by his father's depression and frustration. Divorce is the central theme of *Papa wohnt jetzt in der Heinrichstraße*. Here we see the child not comprehending the end of his parents' love for each other. He is being juggled between the two residences and lives of his parents. He takes out his frustration and anger on his two teddy bears. In the end, he realizes that his rebellious attempts at reconciling them are in vain and tries to adjust to the reality of the situation.

Identity

Earlier child-rearing manuals and children's books aimed at teaching the young to obey authority figures and subordinate their own will to the will of their parents. Miller (Moffit, 1993, p. 49) contends that parents were encouraged to crush the *Eigensinn* (sense of oneself) and *Eigenwille* (will of one's own) of the child early before he or she had a chance to develop a separate identity and thus prevent obstinacy and rebelliousness later on in life. It comes as no surprise that on the market today there are many books that intend to counteract these harmful ideas and practices of the past. The new books are designed to help children develop an identity of their own and to respect the individuality of others.

Chamäleon Kunterbunt is a good book to introduce the topic since many students know the English version and take delight in Eric Carle's humorous drawings. The book demonstrates the desires of many children (and teenagers) to be different. Here a chameleon is granted his wish to have the desired attributes of many other animals and people. In the end, however, he is burdened down by these additions to such an extent that he can no longer catch flies and thus support himself. Recognizing the value of his own identity, he wishes himself back, and after his wish is granted he enjoys his own life with renewed vigor.

A German pendant to Carle's book is *Das kleine Ich bin Ich,* which originally appeared in the 70s, but still enjoys great popularity today. In this book, a fantasy animal goes on a journey to find out who he is. He encounters a large number of animals, all of whom reject him on account of his being different. Close to tears, he begins to doubt his own existence, but then he realizes that just because he is different does not mean he does not exist. So he revisits all the animals and informs them that he is he ("*Ich bin ich*"). The animals in turn approve of his separate identity by responding with "you are you". Students like this book because there is much dialog, the text rhymes, and they agree with the intended message.

The disastrous effects of thoughtless comments by other children on the self-image of Kindergarten children is featured in *Der Tag, an dem Marie ein Ungeheuer war.* It tells the story of Marie whose classmates tell her that her feet are too large, that she has a potato nose and a big stomach, and that she should shut her mouth. Using common colloquial expressions (i.e., *nimm die Flossen weg, steck deine Kartoffelnase nicht in meine Sachen, glotz nicht so blöd. halt die Klappe*), the children manage to make her so insecure that she internalizes all the named attributes to such a degree that she is incapacitated to interact with other people. The pictures show very graphically her changed self and her isolation.

Another book on this theme is *Irgendwie Anders* by Kathryn Cave. Although a translation (original title: *Something Else*), it is a favorite with German children and therefore can be included in this category. A lonely fantasy being called *Irgendwie Anders* is trying unsuccessfully to get accepted by imitating the behavior of others. When he is visited at night by another creature called *Etwas,* he replicates the discriminating behavior he has experienced and throws his visitor out. The other creature, however, insists that they could be friends because wht they have in common is that they are different. Finally, they become friends and accept others who are different. The book ends with a wonderful ironic twist as it shows the two creatures welcoming a little boy who looks truly *merkwürdig* (strange, alien) to them.

Destruction of environment

This is another important topic with which German children are confronted at an early age. *Maulwurf Grabowsky* tells the story of a mole that gets displaced and nearly killed when his habitat is destroyed by the construction of an asphalt highway. More drastic in its depiction is Jörg Steiner's book, *Der Bär, der ein Bär bleiben wollte*, a fable showing the problems of an industrialized society. Propelled by increasing corporate profit margins, factories and roads are built on formerly fertile soil and people are reduced to mere cogs in the production process. In his other book, *Die Menschen im Meer*, Steiner goes beyond local practices and depicts the treatment and exploitation of Third World countries on the international scene. Müller looks critically at the human, ecological, and political aspects of national and corporate cultures. Obsessed by power and greed, the powerful of the rich island destroy the resources and the lives of the people on the small island and thereby destroy their own civilization.

A different approach is taken in *Die Torstraße*, which narrates the story of one street from its beginning in 1176 to today's characterless pedestrian zone (*gesichtslose Fußgängerzone)*. Since the accompanying text is lengthy and more difficult, this book is better suited for upper level culture courses or graduate courses. However, the pictures can be used in lower-level classes to study historical developments and contemporary trends in urban planning.

Multicultural issues

Since the number of foreign children in German schools has increased significant in the last 20 years, many picture books have been written to help elementary school children learn to live with their foreign classmates in a peaceful and accepting manner. The earliest book, *Selim and Susanne,* features a Turkish boy who is teased because he does not know the language, has no friends, and is different. After the German girl Susanne has similar experiences while vacationing in Italy, she changes her ways upon her return and initiates a friendship with Selim. Typical of the early books are the stereotypical ways foreigners are presented. They are seen as helpless victims who easily become aggressive. Their linguistic incompetence is equated with intellectual and social inferiority, and a relationship with Germans can only be initiated by willing German helpers. A newer book, *Soham,* focuses on the plight of the children of asylum seekers who are being excluded on neighborhood playgrounds and in German schools. Here the solution is facilitated by a progressive teacher who helps the young children understand and accept individual and cultural differences of their classmates. *Neben mir ist noch Platz* is a more realistic story as it avoids a satisfying happy end. The friendship of a German girl with a Lebanese girl is being tested severely by her German peers, by Neo-Nazi attacks on the refugee housing complex, and by personal misunderstandings. In this book, both cultures are depicted with positive and negative attributes without favoring one over the other. The story ends sadly with the return of the foreign family to its war-torn homeland because of *Ausländerfeindlichkeit* (xenophobia). But there is a ray of hope. The German girl, changed by her experience of friendship with the foreign girl, welcomes a newly-arrived foreign classmate and thus sets a model for others to follow.

The pictures in these four books, although very different from one another, are wonderful illustrations of the true situation of the life of the outsider: spatial distance indicating isolation from others, the Turkish parents working behind windows with wrought-iron bars suggesting a cultural cage or ghetto, Neo-Nazi graffiti on houses, and detailed pictures of foreign dishes, customs, and living conditions juxtaposed with the current German environment.

Matts und die Streifenmäuse treats the topic of outsiders on an allegorical level. Two different kind of mice live on nearby islands. One day Matts and his friends set out to visit the green-striped mice on the other island. After their arrival, the story is split into two parts, and the reader can choose a happy or a sad ending. In the happy version, the reader learns what is needed to interact with others in a productive way (i.e., respect, openness, generosity) while the sad version shows how human shortcomings (i.e., fear, prejudices) lead to personal and intercultural misunderstandings and destruction.

The most positive example for multicultural understanding is *Julies Lieblingsessen*. For one week, Julie not only eats a new dish a day from a different country, she also learns its native name, where and how its ingredients are grown, what implements are used to eat it with, and how the children in that country live. Attractive pictures for each episode are spread over 4 pages with die-cast cutouts that provide detailed insights into the everyday world of foreign children.

German history of the 20th century

Informing young children of the past is a recent development in the history of German children's literature as it forces children to confront uncomfortable and complicated social and ethical issues. Yet, as part of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (coming to terms with the past), German writers have seen fit to write for children in an effort to expose them to important historical events. It goes without saying that these books cannot give a complete explanation of the highly complex social, economic, and political interrelationships of past events. What they can do, however, is to introduce children to historical events and initiate a dialog with the adult (co)reader. The parent or the teacher can provide age-appropriate information and thus enlarge on the scant information provided by the text and the illustrations.

Die Lisa tells the personal story of a 90 year old woman against the background of official German history. Beginning with the Wilhelminian era and ending with the fall of the Wall, the book records her personal life in the same house in Berlin and documents the effects that changes in the political arena had on her private sphere. The pictures capture all the important events with many cultural and historical details and thus are ideal to use in class as an introduction to 20th century history. Thematically related is the recent book *Opas Engel*, in which a grandfather recalls the events of his long life to his grandson. Unlike *Die Lisa,* this book focuses more on the personal story and uses less detail in the pictures. The strength of the book is the obvious discrepancy between the grandfather's perception of his life vs. the visual depiction that shows the true reason for his apparent luck in life.

An excellent book about a working class family in the 1920s is *Phillip hat Glück.* The realistic pictures convey an insightful look at the life of a poor family in a small German town. The inside covers depict all the old-fashioned appliances (i.e., coffee grinders, cameras, steam engines, and scales with weights) that will be found in the story. Textual explanations provide information about their uses and motivate the reader to locate them in the various pictures.

The inclusion of aspects of the Nazi past and the Holocaust into children's literature has caused much controversy in literary circles as these topics challenge the traditional definition and objectives of what constitutes a children's book. Walter and March (1993, p. 39) argue that books about the darkest side of humanity cannot present the events accurately in all their complexities nor offer a happy end or optimistic resolution. Even a message of hope would falsify history. Others disagree. They contend that the Holocaust occurred and that for the sake of the future it is well to remember past horrors in order to assure that it will not happen again. Russell (1996, p. 346) maintains that these books offer tremendous opportunities for adults to provide "emotionally and intellectually expansive experiences for children" because they can explain historical facts, help the young process that information, and open up a dialog about one of the darkest chapters in history.

Studying these books in German classes affords our students the opportunity to see what and how these historical events are presented to German children. None of the books can give a complete and accurate account as they focus on specific aspects of that time period, but taken together they provide the reader with a wealth of information. For our students, it is an exciting venture to identify what has been included and what has been left out and to speculate on the reasons for its inclusion or exclusion.

Judith und Lisa, as indicated earlier, focuses on the friendship between two girls. The Jewish girl is threatened and finally destroyed by political pressures. The episodes narrate faithfully the increasing discrimination and exclusion of Jews and their corresponding effects on the children's relationship. The pictures are especially effective as they reveal visually the rapidly changing physical environment (Nazi parades, flags, Hitler pictures, Nazi slogans), the Jewish child's isolation, and the adults' complicity with the new regime. To add veracity, Reuter used two pictures from archival documents and incorporated them into her fictional narrative.

Otto: Autobiographie eines Teddybären is a literary pendant to *Judith und Lisa* as it concerns the friendship of a German boy and a Jewish boy. As in *Judith und Lisa*, a teddy bear is the link between the two children, but this time he is not the cause of a misunderstanding but the object that brings them back together. This book by an author who grew up in Alsace-Lorraine is more even-handed as it tells of the hardships of both families, their separation, their suffering during the war, and finally the fortuitous reunion of the two old men in America. The illustrations do not shy away from depicting true horror and human pain, but their impact is softened by the happy end of the story.

Papa Weidt is a Schindler tale for children. Narrated in very simple sentences, it tells the story of a man who helped Jewish families by providing work in his business, hiding them, and rescuing some from Auschwitz. Even though Papa Weidt was partially successful, the story also recounts many Jews who were deported and killed. The inside covers provide a brief time line showing the increased legal and social marginalization and persecution of the Jews. The introduction addresses the readers directly and informs them that this story is about helping fellow human beings, even if it endangers one's own life. The pictures are vivid reminders of the seriousness of the situation. Colored pictures show the visible world with its joy and pain, while black and white drawings reveal life behind the façade.

Rosa Weiss was the first children's book on the Holocaust to appear in Germany. Since its publication in 1986, it has caused controversy and comment. It is a tale of resistance as it narrates the story of a young German girl who discovers a concentration camp for children at the outskirts of town and decides to help feed the hungry children. In the end, she becomes a victim herself as she is shot by approaching soldiers. Initially, critics found the book inappropriate for children because of historic inaccuracies and its drastic depiction of various episodes. Lately, critics have taken issue with the representation of Germans as helpers and friends of Jews and therefore regarded equally as victims of the Nazi regime (Shavit, 1999).

Unlike other children's books, this one was first conceived by the illustrator, Roberto Innocenti, who recalled his own experiences during World War II in Italy and wanted to illustrate how a child experiences war without really understanding it. His illustrations are eerily realistic as they resemble documentary photographs. Two of the pictures are based on documentary footage. The apprehended Jewish boy was modeled after the Jewish boy taken into custody during the Jewish uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto, and the scene of the children in the concentration camp was taken from film footage taken by the liberating armies. Most of the pictures are gray, gray-green and olive symbolizing the drab existence under dictatorship. For our students, this is one of the most interesting books to study because the pictures provide a wealth of cultural details about everyday life in a small town in Germany during the 30s. In addition, students can compare the various translations or adaptations of the text, which differ significantly from one another. The original text was written in French by Christophe Gallaz, then translated into English for the American version. The English and German versions, however, are adaptations rather than translations and differ significantly from one another (Stan, 2003). For example, the German text by Abraham Teuter gives more prominence to the town's Nazi mayor, Schröder, who aids the malevolent system and survives in the end while his counterpart, Rosa Weiss, perishes. Another important addition is the reference to people who had disappeared years before and who are now returning. It is fascinating to speculate on the reasons why Teuter wanted to include Holocaust survivors, even though they are not depicted in the accompanying illustration. Comparing the various translations and discovering significant deviations give important insights into differing cultural sensibilities and make student learning exciting and rewarding adventures.

Conclusion

Children's books are ideal vehicles to study the language and culture of a foreign country. Reading them as authentic documents and extracting underlying values and beliefs from them are valuable strategies for the study of cultural differences. Analyzing these books, foreign language students learn to read inscriptions of dominant ideology by identifying socially desirable behaviors presented in the text and pictures, which, in turn, enable them to compare them to their own upbringing and cultural conditioning. Making connections between two cultures is a worthy intellectual pursuit for our students and very much in line with our National Standards. Reading authentic children's books adds great pleasure to such an undertaking and should be encouraged in all foreign language courses.

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9

Using Legends and Folktales in the Target Language to Incorporate Culture in the Foreign Language Classroom

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When language students are interested in target cultures, they are much more motivated to learn target languages. As language teachers, we feel disappointed when students do not seem to share our enthusiasm for learning about target cultures. Perhaps it is not the target cultures that are uninteresting to the students, but rather our methods.

After discovering that lectures about history, customs, and religion failed to ignite much curiosity or passion in her students, the author experimented with various more creative ways of teaching culture. This article will describe one activity for teaching culture that the author has found to be enjoyable and very motivating for students. The activity involves students preparing and performing legends and folktales as minidramas and is now a permanent part of her curriculum.

Each semester, the students learn a great deal about the histories, customs, religions, and values of the target countries without even realizing how much they are learning. The activity results in students learning not only the information contained in the legend or folktale presented by their own group, but also in their learning from all of the other groups in the class. Most students seem to perceive the activity as “pure fun,” although exams have proven that the material of cultural value is being retained.

The activity could be used in almost any foreign language class. This article will focus on the activity as it was carried out with first-year college students of Spanish. However, it could easily be modified to suit the needs of students of other languages or students at other levels.

Before starting

The first step is to collect appropriate folktales and legends. Instructors should look for tales that convey a wealth of information about the history, values, religions, and customs of the target countries. Whenever possible, one should try to make sure different world views are represented by the stories. It is also important to keep in mind the maturity and level of the students. For example, a first grade FLES class probably is not ready for a Spanish tale that requires an understanding of the history of the conflict between the Christians and the Moors in Spain, but they would certainly enjoy (and learn a lot from) stories about animals from the cloud forest of Costa Rica. One excellent book of tales for students in the lower grades is *Cuentos del bosque nuboso* (*Stories from the Cloud Forest*) by Gorini, Adelman, Moss, and Mata. The tales in this book could easily be performed by young students, and each tale conveys the great love and respect that Costa Ricans have for wildlife and for the environment. The tales in this book could also be used to teach geography and landforms.
Since the author teaches Elementary Spanish I and II at the college level, more complicated tales were used. The activity was greatly facilitated by a series of books called *Side by Side Bilingual Books* published by Passport Books. However, any collection of legends or folktales from a target culture could be used. The *Side by Side* series makes legends and folktales from many Spanish-speaking countries accessible to even beginning level students. The author chose to use books from this series because each tale provides limitless opportunities for learning about the country where it originated. Each story is preceded by an introduction that relates it to the bigger picture. This means that before students read a story, they read historical and geographical explanations, which are excellent in aiding comprehension of the stories. The series presents the stories in English on the lefthand page and in Spanish on the righthand page. It is very easy even for beginning level students to locate corresponding parts. Some instructors may prefer to use sources that contain only the target language. However, the author found the bilingual books from this series to be very helpful to beginning language students. Of course, students were required to present the minidramas completely in the target language (in this case, Spanish). In past semesters, the instructor has used the *Side by Side* books *Historias de España* (*Stories from Spain*), by Genevieve Barlow and William N. Stivers, *Historias de Latinoamérica* (*Stories from Latin America*) by Barlow, and *Historias de México* (*Stories from Mexico*) by Barlow and Stivers. During the current semester, she will add *Historias de Puerto Rico* (*Stories from Puerto Rico*) by Robert L. Muckley and Adela Martínez-Santiago. She hopes to use other *Side by Side* books of folktales from Spanish-speaking countries in future semesters. The following is a guide to help interested instructors plan the activity:

Day 1

Instructors should explain to the students that in a couple of weeks they will be presenting short skits depicting folktales from countries where the target language is spoken. It would be ideal to be able to dedicate more time to this activity, but readers should know that it is possible to complete the entire activity in about three weeks at the college level. It is also possible to continue to teach out of the regular textbook and spend only a portion of each class on this project. The author typically dedicates half of the class period to continuing with the regular textbook and curriculum. Besides being wonderful for teaching culture, the folktales and legends are also very conducive to teaching vocabulary and grammar in context. The *Side by Side* books have a glossary of more than fifty pages of vocabulary at the back. Many of the tales provide excellent context for studying such grammar points as the use of the preterit versus the use of the imperfect. Also, for more advanced students, there are examples of complex forms. In the rare case where a teacher has the freedom to completely put aside the regular textbook for a while, much more time could be dedicated to the study of the verbs and vocabulary present in each story.

For students at the beginning level, each skit should be from 5 to 10 minutes long. More advanced students could present more elaborate performances. Announce the date or dates for the performances and the location. If there is a stage or an auditorium available, it will enhance the experience for the students. Be sure to tell the students that the folktales chosen for this activity were chosen because they contain important cultural information. Remind them that in order to communicate with someone from another country, it is important not only to speak the language, but also to understand the culture.

Ask students if they can think of any folktales that might tell someone from another country about their own culture. They may think of stories such as “Johnny Appleseed” or “Paul Bunyon.” Ask students what tales like these tell us about our history and our values. They may bring up the pioneer experience, work ethics, or pursuing the American Dream. If students are having trouble at first, instructors may have to model how to make connections between a particular story and some characteristics of American culture. For example, “In one story, Paul Henry worked very hard building railroads. In fact, he sacrificed his life. Why do we admire Paul Henry? Who in our history and our present do you think he could represent?”

Next, ask students if they have heard any tales from other countries. They may not know that many of the tales we love came from other countries. Ask if they know where Hans Christian Anderson is from and what language his stories were originally written in. Do they know where the Arabian Nights stories came from? As homework, ask them to try to think of more folktales or legends that might represent American culture. They should also try to think of any stories they know from other countries and the significance of those stories to the countries of origin.

Day 2

Choose some folktales in the target language to use as examples. Instructors will modify their questions to correspond to the folktale or folktales they have chosen. The following examples come from the folktale *El puente de San Martin en Toledo (The Bridge of St. Martin in Toledo)* as it is written in *Historias de España* (Barlow & Stivers, 1998). Before starting today's activity, ask students what they know about Toledo, Spain (or about the place where the selected folktale "took place"). Mention to students that many folktales and legends are based on real happenings, events, or people, but have been "embellished." Most students will probably know very little about the settings for the stories, which makes the opportunities to learn even greater. You can ask them the same question at the end of class, and they will realize how much they have learned. First, give students time to read the story and ask some comprehension questions. Next, divide the class into groups of five or six. Ask each group to make a list of answers to the question, "What do we know about the history of the target country after reading the story?" Answers might be similar to the following:

- We know that Christians, Moors, and Jews lived together peacefully for some time in Toledo.
- We know that El Greco lived in Toledo.

Next, the groups should answer the question "What do we know about the geography of the target country after reading the story?" In the case of this story, answers might be similar to the following:

- We know that Toledo is situated on the banks of the Tajo River.
- We know that Toledo is the capital of the province of Toledo (it is very helpful to have maps available of the target countries).

Finally, ask students to answer the question, "What values are evident in the story?" For this particular story, some answers might be:

- Honesty (the architect admits his mistake)
- Forgiveness (the mayor gives the architect a second chance)

Day 3

Divide the students into groups of four or five. These will be the groups for the skits, so if possible, try to get a mix of outgoing and shy students in each group. It is not ideal to have more than five students per group because large groups make it possible for some students to get by without participating much. Make it clear that every student is to have a speaking part and that the parts are to be as equal as possible. If there is one major character in the story, it might be a good idea to divide the skit into very short "Acts" and to have different students play the character.

Assign a different folktale to each group. Instructors may choose and assign certain folktales for their instructional value, or may allow each group to choose one. Give the groups time to read the folktales. This may take a while for beginning students, and they may need to look up some words in dictionaries (as mentioned previously, the *Side by Side* books have very complete glossaries). Be sure to ask each group comprehension questions about their story (this may not be as necessary if they are reading the stories from bilingual books such as the *Side by Side* books).

Ask each group to decide who will play each role and to talk about possible costumes and props. Students often get very creative and prepare elaborate costumes, props, and sets. These things usually help their classmates understand their story. Instructors should let students know the expectations regarding such preparations. Although students will have some time to prepare in class, each group should immediately arrange some times outside of class to meet. The earlier this is done, the better, as coordinating schedules can be difficult. Ask students to bring note cards to the next class.

Day 4

Today students will work on preparing their lines. Each student should write his or her own lines on note cards. When all students in a group are ready, the group should start doing "readings." For the performances, students should try to have their lines memorized. Instructors may allow students with many lines to keep some note cards hidden in a pocket "just in case." Talk to students about voice projection and facial expression. If possible, groups may spread out in order to practice. After a few readings, the groups should start trying to add actions. The instructor should circulate to answer questions and give advice. Students often have questions about the pronunciation of certain words.

Days 5 and 6

Continue to check the progress of the groups. Confirm that they have been meeting outside of class. Sometimes it will become clear at this point that a certain member of the group is not participating fully. Try to talk to that member and find out what is going on. Sometimes all he or she needs is some prompting. From time to time an instructor may discover that a student has extreme stage fright. In that case one might ask that student to participate in the performance day in a different way (perhaps he or she could videotape or provide sound or light support) and then to turn in a composition about his or her group's folktale. Ideas for composition assignments related to the folktales will be provided later in this article.

Days 7 and 8 (Performance Days)

These are the “big” days. It is much better to reserve two days for performances and to have a little extra time than to have to rush the last groups. No group should have to rush after all of the time spent on preparation. Instructors should attempt to reserve a special performance venue, if possible. Having the skits in a place different from the regular classroom provides a sense of novelty and excitement. Be sure to ask in advance whether or not groups will need anything “special.” Students present the skits in a wide variety of creative ways. Some groups present a puppet show, and so they need something like a large table with a sheet or blanket over it. Other groups have used “Elmo” overhead projectors and Lego figures to present their tales. Many groups use music, so it is a good idea to have a CD player ready. Consider whether or not the room can be made dark (are there blinds on the windows?) If possible, it is better to have a slightly elevated stage area. Instructors may want to ask students if they would mind having other classes attend their performances. Some classes prefer to perform only for each other.

It is a good idea to prepare a worksheet on which students can take notes. The author finds that the students in the audience are more actively engaged in the performances when they have certain things to look for. The best way to organize the worksheet is in the form of a table. The left hand column of the table should list the titles of all the folktales to be performed. The other columns should be labeled “Place” (both country and city are often mentioned in the folktales), “Time,” “History,” “Customs,” “Religion,” and “Values.” Since many folktales include information about holidays and festivals as well, the instructor may want to add columns labeled “Holidays” and “Festivals.” The final column should be labeled “Branching Out.” In this column students should write ideas for possible future study or projects. For example, “I would like to learn more about Toledo” or “I would like to learn more about El Greco.” These ideas could possibly be used as topics for final projects.

The author recommends including questions on the folktale performances on the next quiz or test and letting students know about this plan in advance. This way they can plan to take notes during the skits. This also tends to increase their attentiveness during the performances of other groups. Having one student in each group give an introduction (in the target language) that provides a setting (both historical and geographical) is a good way to improve audience comprehension. Have each group show the location of their tale on a map. In addition, the instructor should ask comprehension questions after each performance and provide additional information if necessary. It may be helpful to summarize in instances where performances are shaky or somewhat difficult to understand. In more advanced classes, the students in the performing group may be able to ask the comprehension questions and summarize the tales themselves. The instructor should try to give both positive feedback and recommendations for improvement for each group. If the skits are being graded, the instructor will be busy taking notes. It is important to grade students individually and to give credit for effort and extra creativity.

Students seem to enjoy having their skits videotaped. They can take turns taping each other so that the instructor will be free to take notes. Instructors may want to make the videotapes available for check out at the library.

Ideas for composition assignments

The following are possible topics for writing assignments that could be assigned at any point before, during, or after this activity:

- Research and write about the places of origin of the folktales.
- Research and write about any festivals or holidays mentioned in the folktales.
- Research and write about what was happening historically at the time of the setting of the folktale (most of the introductions to the *Side by Side* folktales mention dates).
- Research and write about any important figures mentioned in the folktales. For example, the folktale *Un lecho de rosas (A Bed of Roses)* from the book *Historias de México* (*Stories from Mexico*) (Barlow & Stivers, 1995) features the important figures of Montezuma, Cuauhtemoc, and Cortez.
- Research and write about important symbols mentioned in the folktales and why they are significant to the target cultures. For example, the folktale "Quetzal no muere nunca" ("Quetzal Will Never Die") from the book *Historias de Latinoamérica* (*Stories from Latin America*) (Barlow, 1995) tells the story of a bird that is very important in Guatemala, and the folktale "Los Novios" ("The Sweethearts") (Barlow & Stivers, 1995) tells the story of the volcanoes Popocatepetl and Itaxiccihuatl that are very important to Mexicans. Compare and contrast folktales from different cultures. For example, according to Barlow and Stivers (1995), most cultures have stories explaining why there are visible marks on the surface of the moon.

Each folktale opens up endless possibilities for exploration. These are only a few of many possible ideas for further investigation.

Conclusion

The students involved in preparing and performing these folktales do more than learn about other cultures. By stepping into the roles of different characters, they actually experience the cultures to some extent. Folktales and legends are based upon all that is important to a culture (its history, customs, traditions, religion, and values). When students learn what is important to people from other cultures, they take a step towards increasing international understanding. For example, a student who says to a Mexican or Mexican American, "I know who Cuauhtemoc is and I know why you admire him, and I admire him also" makes a connection and sends the message, "I value your culture and I am learning about it."

However, the study of the folktales and legends of other cultures does more than teach us about the unique characteristics of each culture. It also teaches us about the characteristics we all have in common. It unites us. There is something universal in every folktale and legend, something that rings true in every person, no matter where he or she is from. Themes such as life, death, fear, joy, sorrow, and love are not unique to any culture. Perhaps these themes could be called part of the culture we all share, the culture of humanity.

Thus, the goal of this activity is to guide students in their quest to learn about the distinct cultures of the world, while at the same time helping them to understand the important ways in which we are all the same.

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10
Meaningful Learning through Personal Connections

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Recent advances in the area of educational research known as brain-based learning have significantly influenced the field of language acquisition. It has been recognized that foreign and second language learning relies heavily on long-term memory, defined as the capacity for storing and retrieving information over time (Stevick, 1996; Sousa, 2001). According to Baddeley (1982), the ability to learn and remember may be the most essential characteristic that allows development of language.

Meaning is considered a crucial factor associated with long-term memory and language learning. Language is best acquired when the information is meaningful and personally relevant to the students (Shafe, 1998). In contrast, if meaning is absent and new learning is irrelevant, the information the teachers may try hard to convey becomes useless and it is less likely to get stored long-term (Caine & Caine, 1993; Sousa, 2001; Wolfe, 2001). If the students are expected to find meaning, they should be provided with opportunities to connect the new information to their past experiences and share these connections with each other (Hall, 2000; Sousa).

The importance of making connections in language learning is also reflected in the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning* (1996), where Connections is identified as one of the five goals. The goals serve as a guide for language professionals to keep in mind when researching, creating, and implementing instructional activities in the classroom.

The purpose of this article is to provide some examples of instructional activities, strategies, and suggestions that may benefit language learners through a variety of connections based on students' previous knowledge, age, interests, and curiosity.

Mini-interviews

Quite often, teachers are under pressure to finish a number of carefully pre-planned textbook assignments before the bell. One simple way to connect with students—mini-interviews—does not require much effort on behalf of language teachers. Students are more likely to stay involved if they are frequently asked personally relevant questions and encouraged to use new information immediately. By using cooperative learning structures and shifting the responsibility for asking questions to the classmates, every single student has an opportunity to be connected. Such mini-interviews in a think-pair-share format are also a valuable strategy for connecting new learning to what students already know, and they should be used more in the classroom.

For example, after introducing numbers, a teacher may suggest that students exchange their own phone numbers in a target language (mini-interview) as a substitution for a textbook exercise. Afterwards, an immediate connection to the target culture can be established by discussing differences and similarities in the ways the numbers are used in other cultures. For instance, most Russians hand-write their Arabic numerals 1 and 7 differently and use the day/month/year pattern for their dates, so the discussion will offer an additional bonus of recognizing different viewpoints available through the target culture. Likewise, after learning colors, students may be asked about their favorite colors and what particular colors mean to them (mini-interview), and then compare their feedback with the meanings of certain colors in a target culture.

Dressed for the job

The topic "Professions and Occupations" naturally leads to a personally relevant discussion, especially on a high school level, where students move closer to choosing their future career options. Even undecided students can reflect on what they find attractive about certain professions and provide reasons why some choices will not suit them.

For a number of years of teaching high school Russian and German, I had been combining professions and colors/clothes in what some of my students considered their favorite homework assignment. Capitalizing on the students' artistic abilities, I asked each of them to create a professional uniform/attire for our cardboard paper model, "Miss Piggy," approximately 9" x 10" in size, borrowed from an elementary school teacher. After tracing the outline is traced in class, the "final product" is prepared at home. Students would take turns describing the clothes while their classmates had to guess the occupations. Two of the most memorable items submitted were a fabric-and-glitter ballerina costume and a detailed version of a space suit from Star Trek. Students of any age like being creative, enjoy hands-on assignments, and can appreciate their classmates' sense of humor.

Videotaped fashion shows

It is a well-known fact that fashion and individual styles are very relevant issues for teenagers. Most of teenage students are ready to express their opinions when discussing fashion trends; some of them prefer the latest looks, while others choose to ignore the fashion trends altogether.

Videotaped fashion shows are assignments where students have an opportunity to model formal and informal clothes in a classroom staged fashion runway production, and their performance is recorded on videotape. Students work in pairs and take turns describing each other's fashion looks in a target language. The language learners are also given freedom to select what they want to wear and the music to accompany their modeling appearances. However, students should be reminded to follow school policy guidelines on appropriate clothes to wear, and the teacher also may suggest soundtracks without words: they are less likely to interfere with the students descriptions and help avoid any possible offensive language. While the students are allowed to write their own scripts and brainstorm ideas in the classroom, the rest of the preparation work for this type of assignment should be done at home.

Over the years, my students have demonstrated high levels of creativity and artistic talents, combined with the language performance, describing anything from prom dresses to motorcycle riding gear. Fashion shows bring an element of novelty and a change in familiar classroom routine and, at the same time, they are relevant to learners' interests.

The spinning wheel

Interactive games and game shows, ranging from simple board games to more sophisticated reality TV programs are also popular with teenagers. Classroom teachers should use this popularity in creating engaging language learning activities for students. For example, my students and I made and frequently utilized the so-called "Russian Wheel," which could be instantly and conveniently transformed into the "German Wheel," since all target cultures involved use the same Arabic numerals. The spinning wheel was made by my students in a shop class and finished by using different colors of spray paint and heavy duty self-sticking black numbers that can be found in a home improvement store. It is a great tool for vocabulary review.

Each time, two hosts (one-for recording the letters on the board, and the other-for keeping scores and timing the answers) are in charge and make sure that teams follow the rules: all letters, consonants and vowels alike, should be guessed; the students in each team should work together guessing a letter or the whole phrase/sentence, when ready; the answer is accepted only from the designated person on each team with a different person designated for each game round. The hosts of the show prepare the board with the number of blank squares for each letter of the word/phrase/sentence to be guessed. Students flip a coin and the chosen team spins the wheel. First, the students are to say in the target language the number of points indicated by the arrow on the wheel. If they say the number correctly, they are given 30 seconds to make a guess. If the guess is correct, the team proceeds spinning the wheel. After an incorrect guess, the spinning team loses a turn. Only one team can state the correct answer at a time, and only when it is their turn to answer. Penalties, such as deduction of points, are assigned when other teams interfere with the discussion and fail to wait for their turn. As a rule, the number of students on a team varies from two to four. In classes with large numbers, an additional person can be used for timing, and an additional team of students can be in charge of creating language categories and supplying them to the hosts.

Other teachers have borrowed my wheel for their own activities. My wheel vocabulary review activity was so popular, that in some classes, students kept sign-up sheets to be the hosts. The activity is versatile in that it can be easily adjusted in length, based on the time available, and the teacher has a choice whether to use either teacher-created categories or allow students to be in charge.

Draw-and-review

Students of all ages like to draw, whether they draw well and are making good grades in art or whether it is just an occasional activityfor them. I used drawing as one of my vocabulary review options. After vocabulary has been introduced, students are instructed to choose a word and make up a simple sentence or two to create a context in which the word can be used. To promote transfer, the context needs to be different from the context in which the word is initially introduced by the teacher. Afterwards, each student receives a piece of paper and some colored pencils/crayons and begins to illustrate the sentences with a drawing. After the time is up, students share their sentences and drawings with classmates. The mini-interview format described above can also be used to encourage students to ask each other questions about their drawings.

To make this vocabulary review more challenging for upper level language learners, additional rules are introduced. For example, the students are to mention what color of pencils they used. The sentence, "I drew a hotel with a blue pencil," is more complex grammatically because, besides the new noun, "hotel," it contains a verb in past tense, adjective/noun agreement (and dative case for German/instrumental case for Russian), and the new noun itself is in the accusative case. A word of caution: the teachers should clearly explain their expectations to their students about the time limit for this assignment and provide an example of a sentence the students will need to follow. To save valuable classroom time and allow more time for class discussion, the drawing and the sentences can be finished at home. In smaller classrooms with big chalkboards, students can use the boards instead of paper and draw with colored chalk instead of pencils.

Charades

This activity is recommended for vocabulary review at the end of a big instructional unit, with at least 30 or more vocabulary units to review. Depending on class size, students are divided into teams of three or four, and students number off within each team. The teacher prepares a list of all unit words to be reviewed in English, randomly divides the list according to the number of teams, and gives the team lists to the team captains. If textbook word lists are used for review, it is especially important for the teacher to mix the words so that they do not appear in the same order as in the textbook, to maintain an even proportion of different parts of speech and difficult/easy words for each team.

This is a closed book activity. After the lists are distributed, the teams go to different corners of the classroom to translate their lists into the target language and brainstorm ideas for representing each of the words on the list in pantomime. Depending on a number of words per team, allow about one minute per each word for practice. For example, if there are 10 words on each list, all students should stop brainstorming/rehearsing after 10 minutes, with no additional time allowed. Good team work is especially crucial because every single student on the team is required to participate in every pantomime; the roles will be divided among teammates. Students can make noises, such as an emergency alarm or a cow noise, but no words, letters, syllables, or drawings of any kind are permitted.

After the time is up, the teams take turns presenting their words for other teams to guess. All other teams can have up to 30 seconds to make a guess and should raise their hands when ready to answer. The first team to make a guess has to say the word together first. Then the teacher selects a number from one to four, and the student from the team who has this number as a result of numbering off, has to write the word on the board. Penalty points can be assigned if the word is either mispronounced or misspelled, or the teacher can choose to call on another team instead. The point of this game is not to make it difficult for other teams to guess the words, but to say and write them correctly while having fun.

Things to keep in mind

Teachers know their students best, and therefore they are encouraged to experiment and adjust the suggested activities to best serve the needs of their students and make stronger and more relevant connections. In addition, the following guidelines may be helpful:

- Administer an informal interest inventory at the beginning of the semester. What is meaningful to the teacher may not necessarily be meaningful to the students.
- Allow students to be in charge and accept responsibility.
- Encourage and provide opportunities for creative expression.
- Last, but not least, the true value of any activity is revealed only by the extent to which it is connected to the instructional goals set up for the class.

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11

Bridging the Gap between Foreign Language Classroom and Community: The Use of Electronic Mail in the First Semester of First-year Czech

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The Czech program in a large mid-western university attracts many students who are of Czech heritage. They are usually highly motivated individuals who have a strong desire to learn the language in order to better understand their heritage. At the beginning of each semester, the instructors of Czech always ask their students to write down their goals and purposes for studying Czech. The following is an example of what one of them had to say:

> I've always wanted to learn Czech. My main reason was so I'd know what my grandparents were saying when they talked in Czech. Now I'd like to have conversations with my grandma. I'd also like to go to the Czech Republic and see my relatives there.

The Czech students are third- and fourth-generation Czech immigrants in this mid-western state. Many students mention that their grandparents spoke Czech but their parents do not. As one of the student stated: "My parents understand Czech more than they speak. And now my generation knows little Czech." As a result, Czech as a language learned from parents is disappearing in the state. Some students enroll in Czech courses in order to maintain the Czech language in their communities by studying it first and then teaching it to other members of their communities. This is what one of the students said: "I want to teach children in [my community] the Czech language. We practice so many traditions [there], but do not provide the opportunity to our youth to learn the Czech language." This student's thoughts coincided with the other student's response: "My grandpa could speak Czech, and I would like to know the language like him and pass it down to my [future] children/grandchildren."

However, there is usually one fourth of the students who do not have ties with Czech. Some of them decide to take Czech because they have studied Russian or Polish and would like to learn another Slavic language.

The first semester of college Czech combines the teaching of language skills and culture. An emphasis on communicative language teaching is stressed, and students are given many opportunities to express themselves in written and spoken ways. Standards for Foreign Language Learning (1996) are used as a guideline to determine curriculum and activities in each course. The standards emphasize that students are given "ample opportunities to explore, develop and use communication strategies, learning strategies, critical thinking skills, and skills in technology, as well as the appropriate elements of the language system and culture" (p.28).

The standards consist of five goals: communication, cultures, comparisons, connections, and community. The latter goal (community - participation in multilingual communities at home and around the world) is often a challenge for foreign language instructors due to teachers' time constraints and difficulties in locating authentic resources to incorporate into the foreign language classroom. This study illustrates how the community goal can be achieved in a first semester Czech course by using an electronic communication to bridge the classroom and the Czech community at large.

In the fall 2001, the first semester of Czech was team-taught in order to provide optimal benefits to students in combining an American-born and a foreign-born instructor. The American-born male instructor was well versed in Czech grammar while the foreign one was a graduate student at a research university and served as a cultural liaison and researcher in this study.

As a part of the Czech 101class, all students had to write journals once a week beginning in the second week of the semester. The topics varied depending on the students' interest and curriculum. The fourth week in the semester, students were asked to write a letter to an imaginary pen pal in Czech. The teacher gave feedback on these letters, graded them, and returned them to the students. The instructor introduced the website, **www.penpalnet.com**, explained how it worked, and asked for volunteers to participate in a pen pal project.

Those students who chose to participate had to send the corrected version of the letter to their chosen pen pals in the Czech Republic by using the website provided. Some students sent their letter to more than one person to make sure that there would be at least one response from someone. Some students experienced success from the start, and within a day they received a response from their pen pals. Others had to wait or choose another person on that website. Four weeks after the introduction of the website, all volunteers were corresponding either with one or two people from the Czech Republic.

It was agreed that students would provide copies of all e-mails, both sent and received, to the researcher. The researcher typed all pen pals' e-mails and used them as reading activities in the Czech classroom. Each student received three to five responses and two students even doubled this number because they had two pen pals rather than one.

Purpose of the study and research questions

The purpose of this intrinsic case study was to describe an electronic mail exchange in the form of a pen pal project and to gain the student perspective about the activity. This project served to connect beginning foreign language instruction with an authentic target language community. The research question investigated was: In what ways can an electronic mail bridge the gap between a first semester foreign language instruction at a university and an authentic Czech community? The sub-questions were as follows:

1. How do students describe the pen pal project in which they are involved?
2. What do students experience when going through the pen pal project?
3. What techniques do students use to participate in the pen pal project?

Limitations of the tudy

The findings of this case study might not be applicable to other first semester foreign language courses. The case was examined for its uniqueness. Although the naturalistic approach was deemed to be the most appropriate to this study, there could be certain limitations that might impact the findings. The researcher's presence in this foreign language instruction might have influenced the students, leading them to certain reactions that could distort the findings (Everson & Green, 1986).

METHODOLOGY

The case study design

Among various traditions of qualitative approach, a case study research design seemed to be the most suitable for this study due to its uniqueness bounded by time (a semester) and place (a Czech language class).The case was also situated in a physical setting of the first semester beginning Czech language course at a large mid-western university. The study utilized multiple sources of information to provide an in-depth picture of this case.

Participant selection

The case study took place in the fall semester of 200 ; 10 students were enrolled in the class. Seven students out of 10 volunteered to participate in the pen pal exchange project. Students' ages ranged from 22 to 56 years old. Four female (Ann, Karri, Lea, and Mary) and three male students (Esser, Herald, and Honza) decided to take part in the project. Two of these students were not of Czech heritage. In the middle of the semester one male student (Esser) stopped participating due to the demands of his Masters' thesis, and one female student (Ann) experienced a lack of participation from a native speaker and was removed from the study as well.

Data collection

The researcher used multiple sources of data collection. Data sources consisted of open-ended interviews, participant observations, field notes, and documents such as e-mails from the students and their pen pals in order to provide a detailed in-depth picture of this case. Each student was interviewed three times during the study: at the beginning after receiving a first e-mail from their pen pals, in the middle after receiving a second or third e-mail from them, and at the end of the semester. To ensure confidentiality, each student chose a pseudonym for this study. The researcher audiotaped each interview and transcribed it verbatim. For the interviews, protocols were employed mixed with open-ended and semi-structured questions.

Data analysis

The researcher started analyzing the data as soon as the first set of interviews was conducted in the field. Since qualitative data collection and data analysis drive each other, the basic assumptions of qualitative analysis holds that data collection and data analysis will occur simultaneously. The matter of reduction and interpretation was an important process of data analysis in this study (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). The researcher analyzed the study by using Stake (1995) forms of data analysis. In categorical aggregation, she looked for instances of issue-relevant meanings from the data, which she later collapsed into three patterns such as students' reactions to the pen-pal project, students' experiences in the pen-pal project, and students' learning strategies. Each of these patterns was divided into sub-categories.

Verification procedures

In order to convey the consistency and dependability of the results of the study, an emphasis on an importance of triangulation and member checking proposed by Stake (1995) was used. To establish internal validity, the accuracy of the information, the following steps were required in the study.

Triangulation of data

Three face-to face interviews were conducted with all participants and each student was observed in class during the semester. The participants' documents such as e-mails to and from their pen pals and researcher's field notes were also collected. During the study, there was a variety of emerging data that were later triangulated. The participants were involved in all phases of the research, and the data were collected from numerous sources. Details or rich description were the key to internal validity in this study as long as it supported the stated purpose of the study.

Member checks

All textual data and data analysis products were presented to the participants to check for accuracy of information. The interviews consisted of a dialogue between the researcher and the participants. Each interview was transcribed by the researcher and sent back to each participant to verify the accuracy of the information and make changes if necessary.

Participant involvement

Inherent in the qualitative design, the distance between the researcher and the participants was minimal (Guba & Lincoln, 1988). Continual checking and rechecking verbally and in writing contributed to the development of trust between the researcher and the participants. Assurances of confidentiality were important if the study was to have depth and meaning.

External validity in this study referred to the reader "generalizability," which implied that there was a rich and accurate description of this study. Thus, in order to achieve an external validity, a thick, rich narrative complied throughout simultaneous data collection and data analysis from multiple sources was composed.

The Role of the researcher

Throughout the study, the researcher tried to keep the stance of "empathic neutrality" (Patton, 1990). She was either a participant or non-participant observer depending on a situation. She took a neutral nonjudgmental stance but did not exclude her personal experience and empathic insight when interpreting the data.

FINDINGS

Students' reactions to the pen-pal project

This pattern was divided into students' reactions to the idea of the pen-pal project at the beginning of the semester, their first reactions to their involvement in it, their reactions to the pen-pal project at the end of the semester, and to the use of electronic mail.

Students' reactions to the idea of the pen-pal project at the beginning of the semester

When the researcher announced that the students-volunteers were going to correspond with native speakers of Czech from the Czech Republic, the overall response was very positive. Students perceived it to be a great way to meet people from far away, to study the language better, to learn about the Czech culture, and to establish some sort of relationship with Czechs. In the interviews, they stressed that they liked the idea of the pen pal project and were supportive of it. As Karri said,

> I was really excited to hear about the pen pal project, because it sounded like a lot of fun and it was a great way to meet people in the Czech Republic and in other places apparently, because I got responses from everywhere… I am very glad that we are given this opportunity… The whole pen-pal project in general is a good thing.

For Herald, the idea of "talking to somebody who's grown up with the language the whole life" inspired him to get involved in this project. He perceived it as a good practice by not only being able to converse with native speakers in a written form, but also "as you learn something, you can apply it and e-mail it to them and see how you do, if they understand you, then you're doing a good job." The idea of instant application of the target language made demands on students themselves. As Honza said, "it kind of puts you in a situation; it forces you to really study and research the language just to communicate." Esser said that this project "makes me think and look up words that I normally would not look up."

For Mary, the idea of being involved in the pen pal project made her happy. Her father had done it with a Russian speaker a long time ago, and she felt she "was following in his footsteps." Based on her father's friendship with the Russian person, Mary expected to form "a nice solid friendship with a person from far away." Ann also saw having a pen pal relationship as "pretty rewarding." She indicated that there were not many chances to correspond with people internationally, and doing it for a class was "a good opportunity." Herald indicated that for him, "it's kind of interesting to have somebody far away to talk to. It's just different culture, learn what kind of stuff they do there, compare to what we do here."

Students' reactions to their involvement in the pen-pal project

As with any new learning experiences, students might be cautious from the start. Having a native speaker on the other end of the e-mail system could intimidate students and pose initial fear of being perceived as "stupid" due to their limited linguistic abilities. Five students out of seven were a little "apprehensive," "scared," and had "some doubts".

Lea's initial reaction to the idea of getting involved was, "Oh, my Czech is so elementary I don't know if I can share anything of worth sharing that would show any sign of intelligence." Karri confirmed it by saying that she was "a little bit hesitant, a little scared because this is only my beginning Czech class and I did not know if my Czech would be up to par with any native Czech speaker." Another student, Honza indicated that he was a little apprehensive when he started "because I don't think I speak the language well enough to communicate with somebody else… I am little uncomfortable doing that but that's just because I don't understand Czech very well yet." Ann was a little apprehensive as well, "just because it's a beginning language course and I don't really think I would have the skills to correspond beyond just you know 'hi, my name is Ann'." For Esser, being able to understand a reply from his pen pal and "getting it right" was the source of his fear.

Mary and Herald were the only students who did not feel anxiety or fear of getting involved in the project. Mary thought that it was "a great way for us to get everyday practice with our Czech." Her only doubts were about the type of people who might respond to her e-mails and whether those people would have good intentions for this correspondence. Herald, on the other hand, felt that he "did not have any problems with that idea. Since my ancestors were from there, I thought it would be interesting to actually talk to someone from the Czech Republic."

Students' reactions to the pen-pal project at the end of the semester

Based on an overall positive reaction to the pen pal project, all students indicated they would like to correspond with their pen pals even after the semester was over. Being able to apply the learned material and to explore new aspects of the target language independently seemed to be a motivating force in this pen pal project. Herald confirmed his initial reaction to the project by saying:

> I think it is cool… Maybe part of it is my history, my great grandparents coming from there. You wonder what it was like when they were there. It's just a different place. It's a long way away. I've never been that far from home before, and it's just interesting to know what it's like over there, culturally, or even what kind of weather they have over there, simple things like that.

An immediate application of the Czech language in an authentic context engaged and intrinsically motivated him in the foreign language classroom. In his interview he compared his studies in Czech with the ones in Spanish when he was in a high school. He said:

> You are actually applying it [the language]. Maybe that's why I did not do so well in Spanish in high school, because I never had any interest in it, just you know you went to class and listen to the instructor and that was it. So it was pretty boring and I just had no interest in it, and I could not find any way to actually apply Spanish. I know a lot of people that can speak it but it just did not strike me as something that I wanted to do – speak Spanish.

Honza also indicated that the pen pal project made him apply and learn the language because "it forces you to step out of your comfort level, and you don't grow inside your comfort zone." Despite the fact, that he had mixed feelings such as "love and hate" towards the project, he thought, "this type of project should be part of any foreign language class." He explained that his feelings were based on mismatch of his linguistic and cognitive abilities in the target and native languages. He said, "My Czech and English comprehension don't match and I get a headache when I get a letter and have to compose a response, this is hate. And love is when I compose a letter to communicate in another language."

Students felt motivated to continue correspondence due to several reasons. Honza, for example, wanted to achieve a higher proficiency in the language. He said, "In the future, I would like to read, compose a letter and send it without getting up to use my dictionary."

For Karri, her pen pal's personality played the most crucial role in her decision to continue in this pen-pal project. She mentioned that her pen pal "seems like a very cool girl, and I'd like to keep corresponding with her as long as I can." She stated that she was satisfied with the pen pal project: "I am very, very happy with the way it's going, the things are progressing and I hope to correspond with her after class is over." Lea also said that she "would like to continue to communicate back and forth with her. I would like to be able to tell her a lot more than I can." When asked to explain the desire to continue the correspondence, she gave the following explanation:

> It is interesting. I would like to find out more about what she is about, how she is living her life, and some of the traditions she and her family practice, see if they are similar to some of the traditions we have in our family that we still practice back from my great great grandparents.

Some students decided that they would like to continue corresponding so they could keep up with Czech and continue practicing in the language. Herald stated that he would even continue after he would graduate from the university: "I'd like to keep being able to talk to my pen pal, even after I am done with this class and next semester's class. Just kind of having an ongoing thing. That way my Czech would not get too rusty."

Besides getting more practice with the language, Mary would like to establish a closer relationship with her pen pal. She stated:

> I would imagine myself continuing even when the class is over, corresponding with Jitka. So a goal is to sort of make it a closer acquaintance, if not necessarily a friend out of this person and to become better in my Czech, of course. And it will be sort of a conversational Czech, and of course, it won't help me with diacritics, because on e-mails we don't see the "háček" and so on but maybe further along I will be able better to assume where they are, anyway.

Students' reactions to the use of e-mail system

All students agreed that an e-mail system had advantages over the traditional mail system. Speed of communication, immediacy of responses, and convenience were mentioned repeatedly in the interviews. As Lea explained, "E-mail is great, because it's fast and it's immediate. Within a 24-hour period you can easily get a response from someone." Karri also mentioned that e-mail was "excellent. It's quicker; it's faster, more convenient. It always seems like it takes less time. It's nice to know that you can get e-mail from someone today. I can get a response today or tomorrow, or very quickly."

Immediacy of responses placed expectations on students to reply quickly, thus putting them in an intense learning environment. Ann said,

> You'll get a quick response and it'll force you to use your own skills to come with your own response. So it's quicker and I think it makes it harder because then you have to come up with responses quicker, because the expectation with e-mail is that you'll answer relatively soon.

Honza also felt that because of the speed, the e-mail correspondence "gives me more homework which puts me more in a situation to learn it." He also mentioned that by corresponding with native speakers he would get "more of a colloquial education doing this."

Some students also indicated the downside of electronic communication such as a lack of diacritics and the inability to provide actual artifacts. For Esser, the only downside of the e-mail system "would be, with traditional pen-pal you can put 'háček' and 'čárka,' but with e-mail I guess you can't really." Mary indicated that she wanted to get an actual Christmas card from her pen pal, "so maybe I'll ask for her address and send her something, and maybe she'll send me something, so it would be fun."

Students' experiences in the pen-pal project

The second theme that emerged from the data collection and data analysis was students' experiences in the pen-pal project. It was divided into the initial experiences from receiving a pen-pal email and later experiences at the end of the semester.

Initial experiences from receiving a pen-pal e-mail

All participants showed enthusiasm and excitement after receiving a first e-mail from their pen pals. Lea e-mailed the researcher right away after she received her pen pal's e-mail. She was very excited that the person she had in mind sent her a response:

> I was very excited. I had to e-mail you right away and tell you. I sent an e-mail to three people who live in the Czech Republic, and of the

> three the one I received a response from was the only one that could not speak another language and so I was hoping that my response would be from her and it was.

Ann also said, “When I got a response I was excited. I didn’t understand everything that was in the letter but it was really cool.”

Feeling of excitement from getting an e-mail from a native speaker triggered a feeling of fear for some of the students. As Honza described his first reaction, “I was excited. I was happy to get the response and at the same time I was a little bit concerned because I did not know how I could respond.” Mary also felt that she was “kind of horrified because it was all in Czech, and I was afraid it would be too complicated to me.”

Herald, on the other hand, did not know what to expect and was very surprised that an actual person from the Czech Republic replied to his e-mail. He felt that “it was kind of exciting” because of the novelty of this experience. He said:

> It was neat, because I didn’t think anybody would e-mail me back, but they did. … I did not know what to expect I guess. I’ve never done anything like that before. I’ve never sent e-mail or got e-mail from a foreign country, so I was not really sure what to expect but then you see the name from where it is from, I was like “wow, they actually wrote me back.”

Karri felt that her pen pal was very enthusiastic, and she was “very impressed” with her. She was “really excited because she [her pen pal] sounded like a great girl and she was very enthusiastic in e-mail and she told me all about herself.”

Students’ experiences at the end of the project

Another sub-category that emerged from the data collection and data analysis was students’ experiences at the end of the pen-pal project. Students’ satisfaction and excitement did not vanish. Although the majority of students entered the pen pal project with a lot of anxiety and fear, they achieved a personal satisfaction of being able to correspond with native speakers on their own. As Honza said: “Usually I go through anxiety when I try to write a letter, and then after I sent a letter and got a response back, then it’s okay. Then I am satisfied, because I was able to speak with someone [in a foreign language].” He felt: “I was very proud that I could come up with enough information to send a letter to somebody.” Honza realized that it was normal to make mistakes and have anxiety when doing new things such as participating in the pen pal project. He felt that: “It forces you to step out your comfort level, that’s why I have anxiety. But you don’t grow inside your comfort zone.”

Mary also experienced pride in this pen pal project. She said: “It makes me feel proud that I am able to communicate with somebody in a foreign language." Being able to correspond in a foreign language and to be understood by a native speaker gave Karri confidence. As she stated:

> Every time I got an e-mail from her and it made me very, very happy because I just enjoy the thought of being able to write to someone in a language that I am not really, I just started learning and having her understand me was even more exciting. It sort of gave me confidence in what I was doing.

The pen pal project gave Herald "the sense of accomplishment and confidence. Just to know that you can do it on your own." He felt that he experienced "kind of knowing how to compose a letter pretty much on your own. And with getting replies, you learn how to put them together, just to get a pretty good understanding of what they are trying to tell you."

For Lea, having less anxiety and being able to understand the majority of what her pen pal was saying made "it more fun." She said: "I am not as anxious when the e-mail comes, and I am better able to tell what she has said. I recognize more words and so that makes it more fun."

The students continued corresponding with their pen pals despite the amount of work and pressure from their other courses. They even re-sent their e-mails or wrote new ones to their pen pals if they did not hear from them for more than two weeks.

When asked at the end of the semester what she thought about the pen pal project, Karri said:

> I am very satisfied. I am very pleased with it because I think it's an excellent way to learn Czech, to learn written expressions and things of that sort. And just learning about Czech life style, the way people live over there, and what students of my age do is very interesting.

Mary summarized her and other students' feelings about the pen pal project as follows:

> I can tell from other members of the class they are kind of thrilled at having someone so far away be interested in them, it is flattering. I feel that e-mails we've talked about in class, you can almost see that the Czech pen pals are flattered that we are interested in them and so they are flattering us back in a funny kind of way. It makes people feel happy that they are doing something with overall world understanding.

Students' learning strategies

The third pattern that emerged from the data collection and data analysis was students' learning strategies. This theme was divided into categories such as reading strategies and writing strategies from the beginning to the end of the semester.

Students' reading strategies at the beginning of the semester

Students' reading strategies evolved during the pen pal project. Most of the students employed successful strategies from the start to decipher e-mails from the native speakers. Ann, for example, indicated that she used context to interpret the words she did not know. She said that "I don't think it is useful to go through and try to interpret every word in a sentence, so you go through and you try to pick out more important words, and I kind of got a pretty good sense of what she was saying and even when you don't know the meaning of all the words."

Students also used their Czech/English dictionaries to understand their pen pal's e-mails. In all cases, the dictionary was used primarily at the beginning of the study. Even when students could not find all the words there, they felt that they were able to make sense of the e-mails. As Lea talked about the strategies she used at the beginning, she indicated, "I looked through it and identified the words that I thought I knew, and then I borrowed a dictionary and looked up some of the other words. I could not find all of them in the dictionary but I think I was able to make sense of most of what she wrote."

Honza employed the same technique, "any word that I recognized I would write just above that line what that word was, what I knew the meaning would be, and then if the word I did not know, then I would look up the word…and with the exception of one word, I think I was able to understand."

Beside the dictionary, students also used their two instructors of the Czech class to help them understand unknown words. Karri indicated, "Words I did not know I brought to the teachers and hoped that they could let me know what they are." She also described that her knowledge of Russian helped her figure out unknown words. As she said it in the first interview, "a lot of the words I understood from Russian and some of them I guessed took from context." Mary also employed the knowledge of Slavic languages to decipher her pen-pal's first e-mail, "I just used my dictionary and everything made sense to me and my past Slavic experience helped a lot too, with cases, and things that I would not have understood just from Czech classes that I have taken so far."

Students' reading strategies at the end of the semester

Students' comprehension strategies did not change much after the beginning of the semester. As Mary said "I feel I have not changed my strategies too much from the beginning, which is I read it first and try to get the main idea and then actually I feel like I look up more nouns than verbs right away." Certain easiness with understanding the target language can be attributed to the use of the same sentence structures, employed by both the students of Czech and the native speakers. Mary indicated, "At this point, a lot of what we do is bounce from each other's e-mails, so I can understand more quickly what she says, because I know she is talking about something that we talked about last time."

Inevitably, even students with prior Slavic languages continued using the Czech/English dictionary at the end of the semester as a last resort to comprehend their pen pals' e-mails. However, they used it occasionally as Mary said: "I try to use a dictionary as little as possible." Karri also indicated that she used the dictionary if it was absolutely necessary. She described the steps employed in trying to understand her pen pal's e-mail: "I usually read through it first and see if I can point out familiar words, see if I can understand what's going on, and if I need to, I resort to the dictionary." Her knowledge of Russian contributed to an overall comprehension of her pen pal's messages: "I use the book a lot and the dictionary as well and I just try to recognize familiar words from Russian." She admitted that she did not use the dictionary as much as she had done at the beginning of the semester.

At the end of the semester Herald, employed the same technique as other students:

> First, I read it over all the way through, and while I am doing that, I kind of look for familiar words, and as soon as I'm done reading it by that time I know some words. Then I start looking for other, what appeared to be key words in the sentences, and then just go sentence by sentence.

Honza also utilized the same strategy: first, going over a message, looking for familiar words and then looking up unknown words in the dictionary. He said:

> First thing, I try to do something that my teacher has mentioned. I go over it and look for things I recognize, if I can understand anything of what they are saying, just based on the words that are there. And then after that, I just pull out my Czech/English dictionary.

All students employed guessing and trying to figure out unknown words from the context. As Lea stated: "I always look it over right away and identify the words that I know and try to figure out what some of the other words might be." If she did not feel that she was successful in it, then she would find some of the words in the dictionary.

Students' writing strategies at the beginning of the semester

These students also used metacognitive strategies when writing a response to their pen pals. At the beginning, they felt that it was difficult to come up with ideas to write a response. As Honza said: "I don't really know what to talk to them about, so sometimes it's the most difficult part trying to decide "OK, what am I going to write?"

Karri, on the other hand, used other e-mails to get ideas for her responses. As she said: "I used e-mails that other people got from other pen pals for a lot of it, just sort of looking at a construction, using common lines, like "I hope you are doing well" and stuff like that… I just think of things to talk about. I guess the things we've used so far in the book, things we've mentioned."

For Honza, class activities prepared him to write responses to his pen pals. He thought: "I picked up a little bit every time I am in class, and when I go home, I think that I can compose more." He said: "I can look up nouns, and I know verbs, and now I know past tense and future tense, so it is a little bit easier."

On the other hand, Herald looked up more verbs than nouns. He also used his prior knowledge to create a response. He stated that he went from English into Czech when composing an e-mail. He said:

> First thing, I think about something to say, and then I look up the verbs just because that's probably the most important part…And using what you already know too, and then adding that on, and then adding more on, and adding more on. So I just use the verbs as the base.

Lea also used English as a base. She felt: "I do find myself sometimes trying to say it as we would say it in English." She thought about her message in English and then she would "try to say in Czech." She explained that she would like to share more with her pen pal, but "I don't know how to say a lot of the things I would like to share with her. I leave out a lot of things I would like to say."

Mary stated that she had to reread her pen pal's response to "remember what kinds of questions she asked, or what the topic was." Besides the dictionary, she tried "to use words from actual lessons that have happened in my class recently." The words she mostly looked up were verbs and nouns that had not been discussed in class yet. She elaborated on the strategies she used in writing:

> At this point I don't have ready sentences completely [in Czech] yet. My easy words are not going to work out very well with the kind of things we talk about. So I go to the dictionary and look up the main verbs of the sentences that I want to be talking about and then the nouns after that. And then construct something on a piece of paper, written first, and then I transfer that to an electronic form and send it off.

The majority of students' responses received a lot of praise and admiration from the native speakers. However, some students experienced that their pen pals did not understand some of their responses. While they felt it was discouraging and frustrating, it was also beneficial for them to explain what they wanted to say in different terms. Honza was one of those students who said: "It's fine if she does not understand and that I have to write back, I am still learning. At least I know that she does not understand so I can try it again." Lea felt that maybe her pen pal did not trust her. She did not realize that she made a mistake saying that her name was Allen, instead of saying her husband's name was Allen. She said: "So I got a feeling maybe she wondered if it was a man writing to her, but signing a woman's name." When her mistake was pointed out to her, her fear was dismissed. She corrected it and sent the correct version of her e-mail to her pen pal.

Students' writing strategies at the end of the semester

At the end of the semester, students were more successful in coming up with responses on their own. Based on the field notes and interviews, students did not ask their teacher as much as they did at the start. While students felt that they were on their own to write their e-mails from the onset, they took advantage of it more at the end of the semester. Students' strategies did not differ much from each other.

All students thought out first what they were going to write. Some students tried to think in Czech first instead of translating from English into Czech. Mary said that "at this point I don't think of it in English. I try to think about Czech words. Of course, underneath there are all those English words." However, the majority of students tried to think in English and then compose a response in Czech. Herald indicated "I think of it in simple English terms, I try not to make it real complex. Once I figured out what I want to write, then I go and change the adjectives and nouns into the right cases they are supposed to be. Then I look up different verbs, nouns that I don't know."

Lea also stated that she used English as a starting point. English helped her balance her thoughts and kept them coherent. She said that: "If I try to start with Czech, I forget what I wanted to say. So I just write a rough draft in English and then I try to compose it in Czech, and then I go to my book and try to determine if I've done it correctly."

Honza, on the other hand, used his pen pals' e-mails to write a response. As he said: "Sometimes, you can find something that they said, like if they asked a question, I can either say "yes" or I can negate the same question they asked me. And sometimes it's trickier."

Besides the textbook and dictionaries, other students' emails were used more at the end of the semester. As Karri stated: "I use the book a lot and other e-mails that they wrote or responses they've gotten." She also used the textbook to find different topics: "I go through the book and find something interesting to talk about. I ask her about certain aspects of a topic or something of that sort."

Only Mary mentioned that instead of writing a hard copy first, she used a reply button on her computer at the end of the semester. She said that: "I just compose electronically as I think of it. I have a dictionary by me. So I pause sometimes in the middle of what I am trying to say."

Surprisingly, all students pointed out that they paid attention to the declension of the nouns and the adjectives and the conjugation of the verbs by going back to their textbook. When they talked about their writing strategies in the interviews, they always mentioned grammatical forms. For example, Herald indicated:

> If I say, that I have something, then it has to be, of course, Accusative. And I look. Some of them I started getting down, like different forms. I have a little sheet of paper in my notebook that has most of different conjugations and declensions, so I go back and it helps.

Lea stated that: "I try to determine which person I am writing to, and use it correctly. I like using future tense and past tense. It's easier." While the majority of the students were trying to remember different grammatical forms and to use them properly, Mary felt that she experimented with cases she did not study yet: "It's not usually too difficult for me what case to put something in. Although we haven't learned all the cases yet, I sort of rub by that and make it up if I am not sure about it."

DISCUSSION

Among the Internet tools, such as e-mail, electronic bulletin boards, and navigational tools, e-mail is perhaps the most popular communication tool in foreign language instruction (Levy, 1997). E-mail creates a relatively non-threatening atmosphere for students to express, negotiate, and interpret meaning within a meaningful context. Foreign language educators often use e-mail to encourage students to communicate in the target language with native speakers and their peers.

Recent studies on the benefits of e-mail writing have provided important insights into the role of computers in language learning. While many studies have investigated the use of technology in the form of e-mail in intermediate and advanced foreign language classes, the exploration of its use in the first semester of a beginning language class is lacking in the research literature. The majority of the research studies used quantitative approaches (Gonzalez-Bueno & Perez, 2000; Li, 2000), where the voices of students themselves are silent. In order to bring forward the student perspective and experience, a qualitative research methodology was needed. This qualitative case study explored the use of e-mail to connect a first semester beginning Czech class with an authentic Czech community and native speakers of the language.

One of the major challenges of the foreign language classroom teacher is to find a way to promote cross-cultural understanding while developing language proficiency linguistic skills (Evans & Gonzalez, 1993). It is important to teach culture and language together and not as separate items (Omaggio, 1986). E-mail writing in this case study made personal contact possible and provided an authentic context for the students of Czech. The e-mail exchanges with native speakers created significant motivation and resulted in continued correspondence in a social context. Students felt that there was friendship emerging with individuals across the Atlantic that motivated them to engage in continual correspondence. As Liaw (1998) stated, "both the language and e-mail procedures were means for social interaction to occur and be sustained" (p.347). The e-mail exchanges bridged the gap between the culture of students and the culture of the Czech community. Students were immersed in the authentic context where they learned about the cultural practice by using the target language. In addition, negotiation of meaning was carried out between native speakers and the students of Czech through their e-mail exchanges as they asked each other for clarification of various messages. This type of communication was student-driven and made a radical change in student participation and their engagement in the learning process.

All of the participants indicated that they would continue corresponding with their pen pals even after the semester was over. They also highly recommended using pen pal projects with e-mail correspondence in all levels of foreign language classes, including in the first semester of beginning foreign language instruction. As Karri stated: "I think it's a great way to learn Czech for first year students." Another student, Mary confirmed this: "It seems like it would be good for any language class. It seems like a regular part of a language class. When you do culture nights, or food nights, the pen pal project seems along these lines, very helpful."

According to Liaw and Johnson (2001), "learning about the lived culture of actual target language speakers as well as about one's own culture demands tools to assist foreign language learners in negotiating and understanding the communicative and cultural contexts in which the target languages are used" (p.236). This case study demonstrated that the students found themselves highly motivated to learn about their pen pals, their lives, and the communities they live in. Their involvement in e-mail correspondence with native speakers opened doors to mutual appreciation and respect. It instilled pride and a sense of accomplishment in students. It further developed students' learning strategies, especially in the area of writing and reading. E-mail correspondence with native speakers sparked student interest in pursuing grammar knowledge and skills for the purpose of communicating with their native speaker pen pals. All students stated that grammar took on a real and immediate purpose when they were composing e-mail responses. The study also revealed greater student critical thinking and creativity in writing electronic messages. Several studies reported an improvement in the language skills as well as a change in attitude toward language learning in the foreign language classroom (Cononelos & Oliva, 1993; Lee, 1997).

Despite the fact that students started the project with some uneasiness and anxiety, it evolved into a feeling of excitement after they received a first e-mail from their pen pals. Not only were they able to correspond with native speakers in Czech, but also their pen pals could understand their e-mails. This, in turn, motivated students to communicate online with native speakers in the target language. It also motivated students to take risks and be more creative in the target language. Studies of students using email have demonstrated a definite increase in student motivation and attitudes toward second and foreign language learning in intermediate and upper language classes (Cononelos

& Oliva, 1993; Lee, 1997; Van Handle & Corl, 1998; Underwood, 1987). Although this study was conducted in the first semester of a beginning Czech class, it supported the research about increased motivation and positive attitudes toward the language learning.

According to Liaw and Johnson (2001), "a major purpose of an exchange program is to cultivate a deep appreciation of other countries, their cultures, and their people" (p.248). A pen pal project in this study showed students' positive attitudes toward the culture of their pen pals. For students, being able to communicate with someone from the Czech culture was a motivating force to get involved from the start. Herald stressed the importance of it by saying:

> Maybe part of it is my history, my great, great parents coming from there. You wonder what it was like when they were there. It's just a different place. It's a long way away. I've never been that far from home before, and it's just interesting to know what it's like over there, culturally, or even what kind of weather they have over there, simple things like that.

Based on an e-mail cross-cultural experiences study, Liaw and Johnson (2001) found that their students "experienced the process of intercultural communication that contributed to their personal affective development as well as to the development of a more receptive group of language learners" (p.248).

The findings of this effort of incorporating a pen pal project with the use of e-mail in the first semester of the beginning language class were fruitful. They added new information to the current understanding of the use of e-mail as the bridge between the target language community and the beginning foreign language class. It increased students' awareness of their cultural heritage and promoted further investigation of the target language. The findings of this study were unique to this particular setting, context, and participants. The transferability of the study will take place as the audience examines these results in the context of specific circumstances of interest.

Although the e-mail pen pal project findings demonstrated the impact of the e-mail approach on students' learning affectively and socially, the effectiveness of the approach in improving the students' Czech language proficiency is still by and large suggestive or indirect at best. The findings of direct evidence will have to rely on further investigation by combining qualitative and quantitative approaches to inquiry.

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