

# The Year of Languages: Challenges, Changes, and Choices

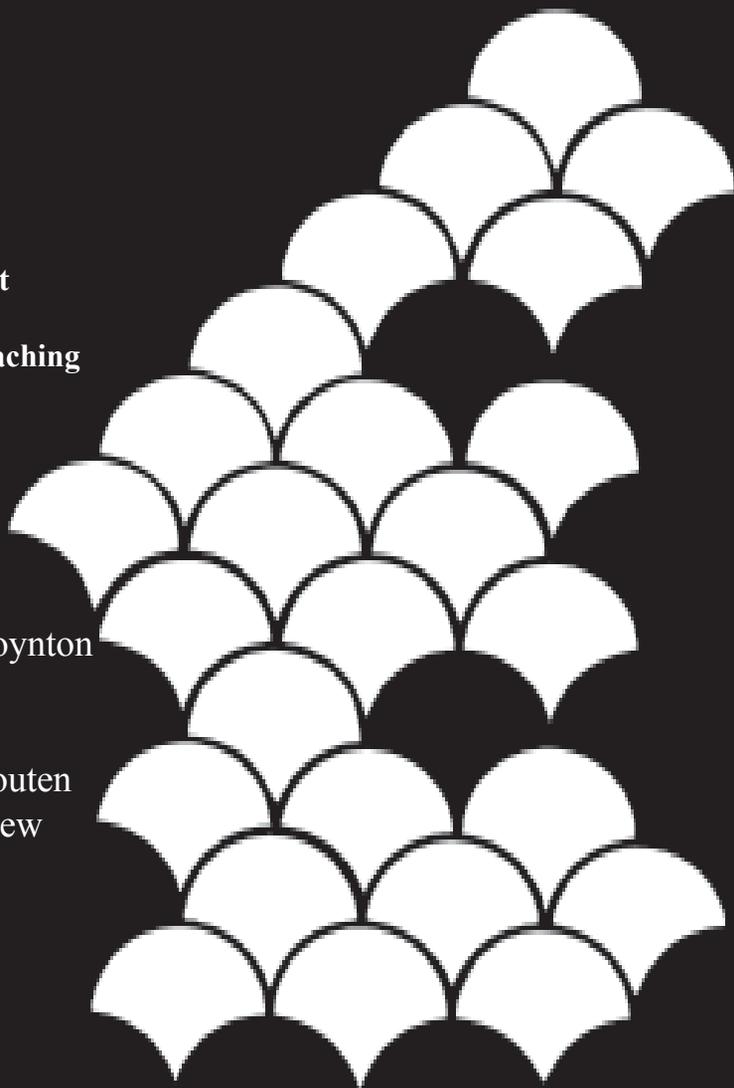
## Editors

Peggy Boyles  
Paul Sandrock

An Anthology of Current  
Research and Practices  
in Foreign Language Teaching

## Feature articles by:

Christine Brown  
Marty Abbott  
Audrey Heining-Boynton  
Aleidine Moeller  
Kristin Hoyt  
Jacque Bott Van Houten  
Helene Zimmer-Loew



2005 Report of the  
Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages





# **The Year of Languages: Challenges, Changes, and Choices**

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**Selected Papers from the 2005  
Central States Conference**

Edited by:

**Peggy Boyles**  
Oklahoma State University

**Paul Sandrock**  
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

**2005 Report of the  
Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages**

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Patrick Raven, Executive Director  
P. O. Box 251  
Milwaukee, WI 53201-0251  
Phone: 414-405-4645  
FAX: 414-276-4650  
CSCTFL@aol.com www.centralstates.cc

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The CSC *Report* is a refereed volume of selected papers based on the theme and program of the 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. The invitation outlines the key themes for the *Report* to which each submission must connect. Copies of the publication guidelines are sent to conference presenters and others who express interest in submitting a manuscript. All submissions 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that the article (1) be published in its current form, (2) be published after specific revisions have been made, or (3) not be published. When all the reviewers' ratings are received, the editors make all final publishing decisions. A critical criterion is how well the article addresses the volume's thematic focus. The names and affiliations of the members of the 2005 Editorial Board are listed below.

The editors would like to point out that all Web site 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.

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# Contents

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Review and Acceptance Procedures. . . . .	iii
Central States Conference Board of Directors . . . . .	iv
Introduction. . . . .	ix
Peggy Boyles, Paul Sandrock	

## **Section 1: The Year of Languages**

<b>Why Does the United States Need to Celebrate 2005 as the Year of Languages?</b> .....	3
Christine Brown	
<b>Fostering Philoxenia: Understanding and Integrating Culture</b> .....	15
Lee Wilberschied	

## **Section 2: Challenges in PK-20 World Language Education**

<b>Effecting Change Both Within and Beyond The Profession</b> .....	26
Marty Abbott, Audrey Heining-Boynnton	
<b>Ignorance Is Not Bliss: The Critical Importance of U.S. Foreign Language Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century</b> .....	35
Keiran Dunne	
<b>Preparing Future Foreign Language Teachers through Digital Portfolio Initiatives</b> .....	41
Christopher Luke	
<b>Core? You Bet! Advocating for World Language Programs in the Age of Accountability</b> .....	47
Deborah W. Robinson, Charles E. Conway	
<b>The Challenge of Language Learning in Wyoming</b> .....	57
Brandee Mau	
<b>L-LINCC: Choosing Electronic Networking for Collaborative Communities</b> .....	61
Rebecca Chism	

<b>Finding a Place in the Core: The Ongoing Challenge to World Languages in an Urban School District.....</b>	<b>69</b>
Gaelle Berg	

### **Section 3: Changes in Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction**

<b>Optimizing Student Success: Focused Curriculum, Meaningful Assessment, and Effective Instruction.....</b>	<b>77</b>
Aleidine Moeller	

<b>Extending the Foreign Language Classroom with Technology: Creating Computerized Oral Activities and Tests.....</b>	<b>85</b>
Janet Flewelling & Donald Snider	

<b>Changes in Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction: Assessing Distance Applications to Foreign Language Learning.....</b>	<b>99</b>
Carolyn Gascoigne	

<b>Challenges and Triumphs of Communicative Distance Instruction.....</b>	<b>107</b>
Lisa Fournier Kowaleski, Darcy Lear, Janice Macián	

<b>Computers in the Modern Language Classroom: Voice Recordings and PowerPoint as Tools for Student Empowerment.....</b>	<b>119</b>
Jeanette Hecker	

<b>Teaching Cultures: A Bringing Together of Cultures, Cultural Elements, and Resource.....</b>	<b>123</b>
Melissa Kentner	

<b>Grammar Feedback Techniques to Promote Metacognitive Reflection in Student Writing.....</b>	<b>129</b>
Deborah Page, Ruth Benander, Teresa Roig-Torres	

<b>Documenting and Improving Student Learning Through LinguaFolios.....</b>	<b>135</b>
Aleidine Moeller, Vickie Scow, Jacque Bott Van Houten	

<b>Learning to Participate, Communicate, and Cooperate in the Language Classroom.....</b>	<b>153</b>
Tatiana Sildus	

<b>Reaching Beyond the Classroom: Ideas for Using Weblogs in Language Education</b> .....	<b>161</b>
Cendel Karaman, Harun Serpil	

#### **Section 4: Choices to Create Real-World Learning**

<b>Choices in Language Learning: An Imminent Call to Respond to a New World Need</b> .....	<b>171</b>
Kristin Hoyt, Jacque Bott Van Houten	

<b>The <i>New World</i>: Challenging the Impediments of the Status Quo</b> .....	<b>189</b>
Tom Welch	

<b>Assessment, Emotional Scaffolding, and Technology: Powerful Allies in the K-12 World Language Classroom</b> .....	<b>197</b>
Connie Fredericks-Malone, Nancy Gadbois	

<b>Service Learning, German Culture, and Intercultural Competence</b> .....	<b>207</b>
Isolde Mueller	

<b>Enticing Poetry: A Technologically-Enhanced Approach to the Study of German</b> .....	<b>219</b>
Jörg Waltje	

#### **Section 5: Celebrations of Language Learning**

<b>The Power of Languages: Why We Learn Them</b> .....	<b>229</b>
Helene Zimmer-Loew	



# Introduction

## *The Year of Languages: Challenges, Changes, and Choices*

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### Editors

**Peggy Boyles**

Oklahoma State University

**Paul Sandrock**

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

The theme for the 2005 Central States Conference, “Year of Languages,” and the title of this volume, *The Year of Languages: Challenges, Changes, and Choices*, reinforce the commitment and passion that language educators demonstrate in their profession. Whether teaching in a small rural school or developing innovative programs in university settings, educators in the Central States are meeting challenges and instigating changes with creativity and enthusiasm. This volume celebrates those efforts.

Taking to heart the call to make 2005 a year for exploring why and how we teach languages, we as editors made a conscious decision to construct the Central States Conference *Report* around five key themes:

1. **Year of Languages,**
2. **Challenges** in PK-20 World Language Education,
3. **Changes** in Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction,
4. **Choices** to Create Real-World Learning, and
5. **Celebrations** of Language Learning.

To open the discussion around each of these topics, we invited professional colleagues who are leading figures in the field of language education to write an anchor paper. These authors crafted an article to address their theme that is both inspiring and challenging. They ask us as our professional response to the advocacy campaign of 2005 The Year of Languages to work collaboratively to make language learning even more effective in serving the needs and motivations of our students and the public.

To explore these issues further and to provide more specific examples of challenges, changes, or choices facing us in world language education, Central States Conference presenters, Advisory Council members, and other language educators responded to the call for submission of articles that follow

up on the anchor papers. These writings provide concrete models to help us all envision what we could do to strengthen world language programs and motivate a broader range of learners. These supporting articles discuss specific aspects of the section's theme, with intriguing illustrations, creative ideas, and unique insights.

In Section 1, *Year of Languages*, lead-off author Christy Brown energizes the reader to become an active participant in the 2005 Year of Languages campaign. Brown's article maps out strategies through which world language educators can *educate*, *celebrate*, and *communicate* to the American public at the local, regional, and national levels. Armed with the arsenal of facts, figures, and anecdotes that Brown provides, readers will be prepared to "join the party" of the 2005 Year of Languages. The contributing article to this section emphasizes the opportunity the Year of Languages offers to educate the American public in regard to world cultures and languages. By describing a variety of models to develop intercultural sensitivity, the article helps readers develop concrete ways to promote intercultural competence in their students, parents, and community leaders both within and beyond their classrooms.

Marty Abbott and Audrey Heining-Boynnton's principle article in Section 2, *Challenges in PK-20 World Language Education*, identifies the challenges and possible solutions to many of the difficult issues facing world language teachers within and beyond our academic settings. With the 2005 Year of Languages as a backdrop, Abbott and Heining-Boynnton identify ways for PK-20 educators to shine the national spotlight on world language education in order to garner support for resolving the challenges world languages educators face.

The contributing articles present unique solutions to the challenges facing world language programs. One of the articles describes an innovative program to meet the challenge of supporting novice K-12 teachers in rural areas of the country who would not otherwise receive the attention that beginning teachers need. In another contributing article, one district's response to the challenge of dwindling budgets and program cuts is addressed with specific strategies to promote world language study to administrators and parents in the community. The unique international business challenges of the borderless electronic age and how educators can best prepare their students for a place in this ever-widening global market is described in another support article for this section. The daunting challenge of effectively documenting and demonstrating a pre-service teacher's performance is met by a digital portfolio project described in another article in Section 2. The nagging challenge of having enough time to develop and assess communication skills was resolved by two authors' technology project that is presented in this section. Finally, in response to another PK-20 challenge, two authors present a foreign language advocacy tool that one state designed to gain the support of the academic community to accept our discipline as "core" to the academic program of all language learners.

In the lead-off paper for Section 3, Ali Moeller frames the rationale and highlights key components for making changes in curriculum, assessment, and instruction. She proposes a focusing of the world language curriculum to meet the needs and interests of students. Standards have given educators a framework to create lessons and units designed to provide practical applications of the language learned, rather than merely covering vocabulary lists and grammatical structures in isolation. Moeller believes that the true measure of one's shift toward this focus is revealed by a close look at classroom assessments to see if students are asked to demonstrate a meaningful application of their language skills in authentic contexts. By keeping such performance assessments in mind, a teacher will plan more effective daily instruction.

The supporting articles of Section 3 describe specific projects in curriculum, assessment, and instruction that are already showing positive signs of improving student learning. Technology plays a key role in enabling many of these promising changes. Examples include using computers for oral activities and tests, PowerPoint and voice recordings for assignments to build students' proficiency, and weblogs to help teachers learn from each other. Two stories clearly illustrate the numerous issues that impact the success of distance learning classes. Both computer technology and cooperative learning activities are presented as practical tools for building students' proficiency in the standards' three modes of communication. Readers will find in this section strategies for integrating the development of cultural understanding with language learning. Authors also share promising practices to improve students' awareness of their learning progress through student-managed portfolios.

Motivating students for lifelong language learning is the focus of Section 4, *Choices to Create Real-World Learning*. Kristin Hoyt and Jacque Bott Van Houten open the discussion with their anchor paper describing the new world language learner, examining "new world" as both a new context for learning and a new set of learners. They ask three key questions: Who are these new world language learners? What is our message? and How do we respond? To implement our motto of "Languages for All," the authors challenge us to design lessons, units, and course options more relevant to individuals' needs and interests. They advocate instruction that responds to learners' varied goals in order to back up the message that learning another language provides personal enrichment, practical communication skills, career enhancement, cognitive impact, and improved national security. They envision our response, then, as providing students with new content, delivery, credit or accountability mechanisms, and programming. The goal is to motivate students with an emphasis on purposeful learning contexts and lifelong applications.

The supporting articles in Section 4 advocate the development of such "new world" options in language learning. One article envisions moving away from the Carnegie unit, which measures student achievement as seat time, to a system of students progressing to the next level of instruction only when they demonstrate the established language goals. Two different articles share detailed examples of how to engage students intellectually and emotionally

in order to boost their achievement, creating such connections through the use of music videos and service learning in the community. Envisioning new approaches to motivate students and develop their content knowledge and language skills led one university to create a multimedia Web-based tool through which students explore personal reactions to themes of poetry.

This CSC *Report* concludes with an inspiring discussion of how and why we learn languages. In Section 5, *Celebrations of Language Learning*, Helene Zimmer-Loew documents the argument that languages are essential in the U.S. because of an increasing number of heritage languages and cultures, the needs of business and industry, the impact on developing English and critical thinking skills, political and security interests, the development of a competitive edge in postsecondary learning and careers, and the resulting personal satisfaction and life-enriching experiences. Vignettes interspersed in the chapter showcase motivating examples of language learning: stories of committing to learning French as an adult, hosting a community celebration of languages and cultures, and students gratefully using their language skills. These are not testimonials of celebrities, but rather are the honest voices of students, teachers, and citizens who came to value the experience of learning another language and entering another culture.

So, where to from here? The Year of Languages may officially be 2005, but celebration is just the beginning. This special emphasis sets in motion the advocacy, reflection, and program development that will strengthen and improve language learning in the U.S. for years to come. Our hope as editors is that this volume's discussion of the challenges, changes, and choices that lie ahead will inspire the reader to take further steps to bring more languages to more students through more models in more grades. The Year of Languages will evolve into the Decade of Languages, 2005 – 2015, under the theme "Realizing Our Vision of Languages for All." We celebrate with each move along that path.

# **Section 1**

## **The Year of Languages**

**Why Does the United States Need to Celebrate 2005 as  
the Year of Languages?**

Christine Brown



**Fostering Philoxenia: Understanding and Integrating Culture**  
**Lee Wilberschied**



# Why Does the United States Need to Celebrate 2005 as the Year of Languages?

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**Christine Brown**

Glastonbury (CT) Public Schools

Americans love to celebrate! From block parties to full-blown world's fairs, this is a nation of partygoers and festival seekers. A quick Google search for "Year of ..." revealed 21 million references to "Year of *something*" celebrations. From the "Year of the Pickle" to the "Year of the Niche," Americans are finding many things to celebrate in 2005.

For language teachers, the 2005 Year of Languages Celebration, unlike some other seemingly frivolous "year of" celebrations, has implications for the language profession and for the quality of life for Americans in general, especially the youth of today. Although language educators might muse about the significance of national promotional efforts that juxtapose the value of language learning with the appreciation of a good gherkin, the language learning cause is no laughing matter.

In 2005 and the decade that follows, language teachers and those who support our cause have an opportunity to influence the attitudes of countless citizens who, today, might associate the significance of a "year of languages" as no more important than a "year of the pickle." As a result of language promotion efforts currently underway, these same citizens might become adamant about the need for Americans to speak two languages in addition to their mother tongue. If our efforts at educating the American public pay off, citizens, armed with the facts and figures about how much it costs Americans in education, international stature, global finance, and national security to be ignorant of the rest of the world, will begin to demand language education at all levels of instruction and at all ages and stages of life.

The 2005 Year of Languages celebration provides an opportunity for each one of us to teach the public at large about the urgency and the value of language learning. Of course, we can't be alone, isolated in our classrooms, trying to convince policy makers and parents of the efficacy of our field. We need a sustained, well-coordinated and well-financed campaign to provide the national backup necessary to reach the "tipping point" in American attitudes about knowing more than two languages. The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages is mounting such a campaign, but ACTFL needs your help.

If we are to realize the tremendous potential of a campaign to encourage all Americans to study at least two languages in addition to their mother tongue, we all need to get on the bandwagon for the national effort

being spearheaded by ACTFL and collaborating organizations.

Who are the “we” I am referring to in this call to action? We, the language teachers; members of state, regional and national language and culture organizations; leaders of all language organizations; parents of students studying other languages; aspiring language teachers and retired language teachers. *All* of us in the language field need to start proselytizing about the value of celebrating 2005 Year of Languages in the United States. The time has come to shamelessly promote the many values of learning new languages and maintaining heritage and indigenous languages. Americans of all ages, all learning styles, and all socio-economic backgrounds can be encouraged to start learning languages in any venue in which they feel comfortable. The time is now to foster much more enthusiasm for the language-competent American of the 21st century.

ACTFL, in collaboration with other professional language organizations, is working hard to create the national tipping point in public perception and funding. They have been working to provide materials, media campaigns, national summits, and web-based information that language educators can use with students, parents, and policy makers to teach the nation about the many gifts gained from language learning. Each of us as language educators has the professional responsibility for taking the facts and ideas that are being amassed for our use and for beginning to make the compelling arguments that will sway students, parents, and the local and state policy makers. We must encourage those outside our field to help us fight for pre-K to post secondary language sequences, more sustained language programs in higher education, adult and community education, and senior citizen language programs. We in the language education field need to look at some of the facts and begin to share on a scheduled, regular basis with students, parents, and local policy makers. Press releases at [www.ACTFL.org](http://www.ACTFL.org) and [www.YearofLanguages.org](http://www.YearofLanguages.org) can be customized to include local language activities and national data for any local newspaper, school publication, or teacher website.

Results of polls are especially effective to share with students and parents. For example, recently, the Associated Press published the sobering results of a poll of how other nations perceive the United States. The October 15, 2004 release was headlined, “Polls in 10 nations show views of America worsening.” This report should give all Americans pause. The ten nations surveyed were not the greatest enemies of the U.S., not those who normally vilify our actions on a daily basis in the media, but our closest friends and allies in the world. (Associated Press, October 15, 2004)

With nearly 100,000 million Americans speaking languages other than English and our international reputation tarnished, we must make the time and find the resources to celebrate our linguistic heritage and plurilingual future for 365 days this year and sustain the effort for the decade that follows. This celebration requires that all language teachers enthusiastically embrace the significance of the moment. A declared celebration becomes an opportunity to create a sense of urgency in the minds of the public

## A Special Moment in History

Language celebrations have been enthusiastically received in other parts of the world. Some Europeans were so committed to their 2000 Year of Languages campaign that they have kept the enthusiasm going for an extra five years. Countries of the European Union have funded special “Lingua Projects,” national prizes and cross-national language competitions for students of languages of all ages.

Chinese citizens have already begun to celebrate 2008 as the Year of English in China. Millions of Chinese citizens are reportedly busy learning English in preparation for the 2008 Olympic games. Why would China, with the strongest developing economy in the world, see fit to back a year of the language? The answer is that the knowledge of other languages is good for business. If Americans are going to be economically strong during the next fifty years, our citizens need to learn the languages and cultures of our business partners, as well as the languages of our citizens, our friends abroad and our enemies. Although English may appear to be a universal language, our economic bottom line, our defense community, and our own diverse citizenry know otherwise.

Why is it vital to establish an American promotional campaign to promote language study that is similar to campaigns in other countries? Recently the critical shortage of language professionals in the military and in diplomatic affairs has been well publicized. Sadly, the public at large and many American policy makers are still confused at best and, at worst, downright hostile about how much time and money it will take to insure that most Americans have the ability to speak one or more languages in addition to English. Many educators and policy makers just don't see the need for Americans to learn other languages. Yet, as all language teachers know, the United States falls woefully behind all other industrialized nations and most developing nations in its commitment to teaching foreign languages. Why is it so hard to convince the public that languages should be at the core of the curriculum? With perseverance and a sustained media campaign, we can begin to raise the consciousness of the average citizen to the facts about the future.

1. The U.S. constitutes less than 5% of the world's population. (Kiplinger Letter, 2005)
2. By 2050 industrialized countries are likely to increase their populations by only 4%; developing countries will increase their populations by 55%. (Kiplinger Letter, 2005)
3. Only 9.3% of Americans speak both English and another language fluently in comparison to 52.7 percent of Europeans who speak their native language and at least one other language fluently.

6 *The Year of Languages: Challenges, Changes, and Choices*

4. 85% of Americans surveyed in 2001 indicated that the knowledge of a foreign language was important and would help them find a better job. (Hayward and Siaya, 2001)
5. 77% of the public surveyed in 2002 supported a foreign language requirement in high school, and 71% supported a college language requirement. (Siaya, Porcelli and Green, 2002)

**Armed with Facts, Language Educators Must Take the Lead**

The leadership of ACTFL and other collaborating language organizations has realized that if we as language organizations don't take the lead in a language promotion effort at this crucial time in our history, no other educational entity is likely to step forward to advocate for language education. It is important to seize the moment, for if we don't act now, we may lose our window of opportunity as well as the increasing public support the polls tell us that we do have.

Although in other nations governmental agencies establish national policies that promote language teaching, our governmental educational entities are not willing at this time to put language education at the center of a first class education in the United States. As a result of many attempts to engage our educational policy makers in more than a dialogue about the importance of language education for all 21st century Americans, it is clear that *we in the language education community* need to mount the full-scale national effort at language promotion. We language teachers must be the ones to take our message to the public at large for support in the development of national language policies and practices that will transform the existing school curricula in grades K–16 and beyond. As Mary Louise Pratt, Past President of the MLA asserted in a recent article,

To whom might we take these ideas? How does one go about creating a new public idea? As our professional gatherings affirm time and again, we are full of ideas. One of the most valuable steps is to translate them into grant applications and new relationships in communities and states. Overall the best thing scholars can do now is work as LEPS (linguistically endowed persons) to assert themselves in educational institutions, in the media, in community organizations, and in state and federal educational bureaucracies, advocating a new public idea, accompanying that idea where possible with concrete suggestions. At stake is not any particular language but the value of advanced language learning itself. No one is better prepared than the scholarly community to make the case. (Pratt, 2004, p. 4)

The promotional campaign of 2005 Year of Languages will launch the new public idea that Pratt calls for as well as a ten year promotional effort that is being called the “Language Decade, 2005-2015.” The Language Decade promises to be a time of much anticipated and unparalleled cooperation between all language and culture associations and a time of national educational and media focus that will put language education at the center of the curriculum. We in the scholarly community must make this new public idea and this professional cooperation our highest priority!

### **A Rich History upon Which to Build**

As a nation, we have not always been so myopic in our support of learning languages. In fact, we have a multilingual heritage upon which to build. The American public needs to learn about our nation’s multilingual history. Watch the [www.yearoflanguages.org](http://www.yearoflanguages.org) website during the year for historical information about the centrality of language study to early schooling in the United States. Find out more about how the study of Latin and Greek was at the center of schooling in the United States until the industrial revolution. Learn that at the turn of the last century, hundreds of thousands of elementary students were studying languages in primary schools. In the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, 500 indigenous languages were spoken. Many native peoples, slaves, indentured servants, and immigrants were multilingual. Our most respected and long venerated national leaders were schooled in Latin and Greek and able to communicate in more than one modern language – Jefferson, Adams, Franklin, Hamilton, among others will be highlighted on the website by a language scholar.

During our more recent history, in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, sadly and devastatingly for our grandparents’ and parents’ generation, language study was seen as *un-American* and was moved out of the curriculum by political events, anti-foreign rhetoric, and vocational education proponents (Brown, 1994, p. 168). In addition, English began its climb onto the world stage as a desirable international language.

Both the elimination of language study from the curriculum in the early grade levels and the rise of English have been difficult hurdles to overcome as language educators have fought for a legitimate place in the core curriculum. A Year of Languages campaign is intended to place language education at the center of the subjects that are seen as utilitarian for global responsibility and competitiveness in the United States in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The language promotion effort underway will educate Americans about the shortsightedness of believing that English is the only language to know. Today, scholars warn that native speakers of English should not be complacent because they can natively speak an increasingly widely used language. British researcher David Graddol recently reported that Chinese, Arabic, and Spanish will also be key international languages and that there could be a backlash against the global spread of English and a reassertion of national languages. (Coughlin, 12/22/04)

The 2005 Year of Languages campaign will help to foster a new American ethic that values language learning as much as math and science. To foster such an ethic the language community must harness the energy of a younger, multicultural, multilingual American population that is already asking for more language education in the schools. As Bernard Spolsky stated at the January, 2005, Year of Languages Summit at the University of North Carolina, research around the world suggests that the greatest motivator for learning other languages is having already studied or already speaking at least one language in addition to one's mother tongue.

Since many of the present parents of American school aged children are foreign born and presumably speak more than one language (foreign born residents presently make up a whopping 37% of the 25 to 44 year old U.S. population), the task of convincing a critical mass of parents may be much easier than we anticipate (The Kiplinger Letter, 12,2004 p.13). As language teachers, we need to work with these parents to gain the support necessary for changing the minds of recalcitrant school policy makers. Certainly we should be forming strong ties to our community-based ethnic groups and working with the ethnic media to promote the 2005 Year of Languages celebration and the Decade of Languages 2005-2015.

### **The Broad Goals of the Year of Languages**

The 2005 Year of Languages is intended to accomplish three main objectives and set the stage for future ongoing promotional efforts. The goals of the campaign are broad. They are to 1) *educate* the public at large about the value of language study, language maintenance, and language use, 2) *celebrate* the linguistic diversity of our nation, and 3) *communicate* to the broad public and to policy makers our needs and successes as language professionals.

#### ***Educate***

Americans of all ages need to be encouraged to start learning languages at an early age and to continue adding additional languages throughout life. One is never too young to start learning another language nor too old to add an additional language. Language professionals and multilingual Americans know that learning other languages leads to a broader world view and enhanced abilities in thinking and human relations. We, the language education community, need to convince the American public that language learning contributes to increased opportunities and vital 21st century skills that can only be attained by studying and using other languages. The very future of our nation depends on all Americans developing a world view and international relations skills. Time is running out on our ability to engage peacefully in international diplomacy. The time is now for Americans to put language education at the center of a 21<sup>st</sup> century education and lifestyle. Our educational message should be clear. Language learning leads to:

- Enhanced critical thinking skills and general cognition at all ages of human development
- First hand knowledge of other people and other cultures and the ability to travel and live comfortably in diverse locations and societies
- Improved economic relationships both at home and abroad
- Increased preparedness in national security

The Centers for International Business Education and Research report that foreign language study provides the ability to both gain a comprehensive understanding of and interaction with the cultures of United States trading partners. Americans lack of language proficiency affects our economic relationships around the world and contributes to the US trade deficits. The 2002 Hart-Rudman National Security Report underscored the shortage of personnel with the foreign language and culture knowledge required to meet security needs across the defense intelligence, foreign policy, and commerce agencies. One federal agency alone estimated its total needs to be 30,000 employees dealing with more than 80 languages.

This year of celebration of language in 2005 will serve as a look to the future for American youth who will be entering the workforce at a time when international understanding, cross-cultural awareness, and linguistic capacity are ever more important for their success as Americans and as citizens of the broader world. As the recent Report on International Education from the Asia Society states, “The U.S. and global economies have become increasingly intertwined. Already one in six jobs is tied to international trade and investment, and exports accounted for about 25 percent of U.S. economic growth over the past decade. Trade with Asia alone now equals over \$800 billion per year... Yet American students lack even rudimentary knowledge of Asia and other world regions.” Much work remains to be done over the next ten years to integrate the study of languages into educational institutions, from kindergarten to university level and beyond.

### *Celebrate*

Senators Christopher Dodd (D-Connecticut) and Thad Cochran (R-Mississippi) have worked together to draft a resolution (SR 180) seeking sponsorship among senators and representatives to celebrate the multilingual heritage of the United States and to create an atmosphere in which Americans understand the value of learning a foreign language for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Governors and state legislatures are also creating resolutions declaring support for 2005 Year of Languages.

Although some of the goals and activities designed for the Year of Language Celebration in the United States will mirror similar goals and activities abroad, our celebration will focus on the already rich and diverse language history we have in our nation. Since the founding of the nation, other

cultures and other languages have played an integral part in the development of our democracy. Through local and regional festivals, artistic performances, heritage language learning opportunities, as well as through many ethnic customs and foods that are shared across our diverse cultures in the United States, Americans continue to celebrate their diversity in many different ways. Today, with nearly one in five Americans speaking a language other than English at home as compared to one in seven 10 years ago, we need more than ever to celebrate the contributions that heritage language and indigenous language groups have made to the rich American tapestry.

### *Communicate*

At the same time that we should recognize the importance of appreciating one another in our nation, it is increasingly clear that Americans need to be prepared to the highest level to understand the entire world and to live in a world where mutual respect and understanding prevail. Recent events in our history point to the devastating effects of not knowing or understanding about other languages and cultures. As Ambassador Nicholas Platt, President of the Asia Society, recently pointed out at a States Institute on International Education in the Schools, in November 2002, “As September 11 showed us ...we don’t have enough national capacity in the major world languages to meet the need of our intelligence communities...some 80 plus federal agencies need foreign language expertise. And they are not simply looking for translators but for analysts and experts in many fields who can interpret the cultural context too.”

American parents whose children will enter the work force in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are increasingly aware of the importance of global communication and travel and of the access to knowledge that technology will provide across cultures and across languages. At the same time, schools and colleges are finding it difficult to create new programs due to ever-present budget realities and federal mandates such as the No Child Left Behind Act. Parental pressure will make the difference when school districts are faced with budget cuts. Which program is to be implemented and which eliminated? Language teachers need to inform parents of what their children are missing by not receiving language instruction.

We need to communicate to the public and to policy makers the successes we have already achieved and the resources we need to accomplish more and better language offerings in the United States. As David Maxwell, the President of Drake University, so insightfully outlined in a recent article, “The FL profession must provide energy, expertise, and focus for a coalition of government officials at all levels, business leaders and cultural organizations in a concerted effort to change the way the public behaves with its dollars and its votes. As Senator Paul Simon once told me, ‘you can’t expect a politician to do something that won’t get more votes.’ Fortunately, he was an exception to his own rule; unfortunately, there are few voices like him left in the public

discourse. It is a void that we must fill.” (Maxwell, 2003, p. 597) In 2005 we need many more voices to communicate our messages. This Year of Languages campaign will give voice to many students, parents and policy makers.

### **The Work Accomplished**

Much thought has already gone into to formulation of the 2005 Year of Languages effort. For more than a year, ACTFL and collaborating organizations have been engaged in preparing for the launch of this national campaign. The following represent just of few of the steps taken to date:

- Researched language policies and promotions in other countries
- Met with European and Chinese counterparts to learn from similar national efforts abroad
- Formed a national Year of Languages Working Committee comprised of representatives of many national language organizations
- Organized national and state Year of Languages committees comprised of language advocates and stakeholders who need and want to foster a more language proficient citizenry
- Furthered a national media and educational campaign through which Americans will understand the value of learning a foreign language for the 21<sup>st</sup> century
- Organized and publicized cultural and artistic events and educational programs for the Year of Languages that underscore the importance of plurilingualism in the United States
- Launched a *YearofLanguages* website that provides resources for language students, educators, parents, and policy makers
- Sponsored a language policy summit that brought together policy makers from government, business and education to create a national action plan for language

### **The Work Ahead**

ACTFL is encouraging all states to create their own honorary and working committees to promote language learning. The state year of language committees (as does the national committee), would include representatives of the business and industry community, any consulates that exist within the state, international roundtables, the World Affairs Councils of the states, representatives from pre-kindergarten to college and university as well as community college and proprietary language schools. Statewide committees should include private and parochial representation. Ethnic groups and religiously affiliated language groups should be encouraged to be participants on the state committees along with supportive political or elected officials who are willing to take the lead in language advocacy. Governors or chief state school officers can be encouraged to be the honorary chairs of their respective

state organizations.

The purpose of the national and the state committees will be to help generate ideas and activities that are appropriate to be carried on at the national and state levels as well as to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas among groups that have traditionally not shared their thoughts on the importance of language learning. The state committees would meet during 2005 to talk about actual events that would take place in 2005 and beyond. The committee would devise ways of publicizing those events and providing the media coverage of events. The state committees should also look at how language learning and the learning about other cultures can be promoted and financed over time. State language organizations in collaboration with colleges and universities can also take the lead in forming a broad-based education coalition to promote language education at the local district and state level. Language coalitions may be formed even in local communities or in several regions in a large state. Many groups have formed these types of coalitions modeled on national initiatives and found the power in networking at the local, state, and national levels for the promotional and lobbying efforts necessary to change legislation and ultimately the educational system in the United States. Recently the national arts groups have formed very successful state coalitions modeled on the National Coalition for the Arts. These groups have sought members from a broad base of community representatives in art and music. Very effective lobbying efforts have taken place because of the work of these arts coalitions. In fact, most of the national and states changes enacted in the fields of athletics, special education, gifted and talented education, physical education, and the arts have come from the formation of broad-based coalitions that are networked together through national organizations taking the lead in educational promotion.

Groups that can form over the course of 2005 can adopt as an action agenda the important recommendations that were made just last year by a highly respected organization that represents all state boards of education, the National Association of State Boards of Education. The report entitled “The Complete Curriculum, Ensuring a Place for the Arts and Foreign Languages in America’s Schools,” called for the following recommendations among others:

- Incorporate both the arts and foreign languages into core graduation requirements, while simultaneously increasing the number of credits required for graduation.
- Encourage higher education institutions to raise standards
- Include arts and foreign language courses when calculating high school grade point averages.
- Incorporate arts and foreign language learning in the early years into standards, curriculum frameworks, and course requirements. Also, encourage local school districts to incorporate the arts and foreign languages into instruction in the early years.
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- Incorporate *all* core subject areas, including the arts and foreign languages, into the improvement strategies promoted by the No Child Left Behind Act.

These recommendations if enacted would transform the landscape for language education in the states. Coalitions could use these goals and adopt other local goals to create a five-year action plan. Founding members could pledge to train new members in the promotion of language education.

This “turnkey” approach to building local, state, and national capacity for the new public idea of the importance of language learning is being modeled by ACTFL and other language organizations during this 2005 Year of Languages Campaign. The ACTFL website and the ACTFL conference in Baltimore will focus on building and sustaining local, state, and national coalitions for language education promotion. This promotion of language will be the first official, organized language campaign in the United States. Won’t you join us as we strive to change the course of history in our nation? Help to define the new American of 2015 – Proud to be a Plurilingual American.

Whatever you do, please don’t sit back and miss the party! Be a part of the solution. Be supportive, involved, and dedicated to spreading the message. Start with something as simple as picking an activity a month that you will carry out with your students, your departments, or your communities. Form community-based Year of Language committees and invite a broad representation of community members to help participate in the calendar of events. Use ideas from state and regional conferences to energize pre-schoolers in your town or your own students, parents, senior citizens, and policy makers about the value of learning languages at any age. Be a promoter and use the ACTFL and state websites to post your ideas and activities. Each one of us can celebrate in our classrooms and our communities while our state, regional, and national organizations work together for the largest U.S. promotion of language learning ever. The real success of such a campaign rests with all of us, our students, their parents, and the community.

**Help make 2005 just the beginning of a remarkable language decade!**

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# Fostering Philoxenia: Understanding and Integrating Culture

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**Lee Wilberschied**  
Cleveland State University

**P**hiloxenia is the opposite of xenophobia, fear of strangers. The use of the word is rare in English and occurs mainly in discussion of Biblical text. In the modern Greek context, however, hotels of the same name convey the notion of hospitality. Yet, in a single word the term identifies a much-needed goal that our profession and our students must communicate to the general population. Far beyond providing hospitality, philoxenia calls for giving up fear, for understanding our place in a world community. To relinquish fear, we must replace it with knowledge, insight, and awareness. Our message to the American public must validate the study of foreign languages and cultures as a way to promote world peace, and cooperation. Our own well-being as a nation depends upon it.

A video recently released by the Asia Society (2003), *Putting the World into World-Class Education (World-Class)*, conveys the urgency of this need for validation with data that should not surprise us, including facts that many around us do not want to believe. For instance, even though one in six businesses in our country is tied to international trade, U.S. students fall next to last in rank in their knowledge of the world. A new type of literacy, international literacy, is necessary.

With crisis and need comes opportunity. Whether within or outside of our borders, our country is intimately associated with and impacted by issues surrounding war, disease, hunger, human rights, and the environment. We have the opportunity to avert or diminish some of those calamities that have a global impact. Thus, international awareness is not a luxury item in our curriculum. The younger generations, in line to inherit the international problems we have begun to witness, face major crises if they are not given the tools and skills that will help them navigate within the 21<sup>st</sup> century world. "Failure to teach world languages, history, and comparative cultures is becoming a major liability," the Asia Society video asserts.

This video is a powerful tool that will help convey our message during the 2005 Year of Languages. Other videos, such as those produced by the University of California Extension (2000) or those developed by the Refugee Services Program of Metropolitan Social Services in Nashville, Tennessee (2001), are also helpful video resources.

In addition, we can support our students and help them to become advocates for the continued study of both language and culture they need.

Beyond integrating culture into language study, we can teach our students how to think about the concept of culture as described by *Standards for Foreign Language Learning: Preparing for the 21st Century* (National Standards, 1996) so that they have tools for problem-solving, for appreciation, and for survival.

### **Definitions and Models for Integration**

A definition and model of culture can give learners an organizing principle to conceptualize ideas developed while studying a world language. This idea of a concept of culture is discussed in national standards (National Standards, 1996), along with a definition of culture as the interrelationship of the philosophical perspectives, the practices (social interactions), and the tangible and intangible products of a society.

Nevertheless, teachers need not be new to the field to feel unprepared to integrate the notion and substance of culture for their learners or for the public at large. Bennett, Bennett, and Allen (1999) acknowledge that teachers may be fearful of teaching culture and intercultural competence because they may never have been taught either element, or they may have no direct experience of the culture of the world language. Bennett et al. caution against the thinking that culture is a distinct entity to be mastered rather than an interactive process between the learners and the cultural contexts (1999, p. 5). This “process” view allows the teacher to be a learner as well, and at least three models can facilitate a comfortable beginning—the Bennett Model, the Kluckhohn Model, and a model for Foreign Language in the Elementary Schools (FLES).

The first of these is the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) (Bennett, Bennett, & Allen, 1999), which provides an instrument so that the teachers can determine the readiness of their students for certain types of intercultural learning. The theoretical bases for the model are Constructivism and the Sapir/Whorf Hypothesis, which help to explain the six stages of growth through which learners progress as they move along a continuum from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism: denial, defense, minimization, acceptance, adaptation, and integration. These stages can parallel the growth of competence in the language if students are given opportunities for insight, awareness, and appreciation of culture along with experiences in linguistic development. It is essential to note that if students do not have these opportunities, it is not at all likely that they will progress beyond the initial stage (Ingram & O’Neill, 1999).

Bennett et al. describe each stage and show how each is diagnosed through observed behavior of students (mainly their verbal statements). For instance, in the Denial stage, learners often “lump all Asians, or all people of color together...and are profoundly unaware of their own cultures.” Further, it is extremely important to note that learners can remain in the Denial stage for their entire lives unless they have opportunities to develop awareness (p. 12). In contrast, learners in the Adaptation stage may make statements such as, “I think a Russian reaction to this situation might be...,” and they are able

to change their behavior according to different cultural contexts.

After diagnosing the stage(s) at which most of the class is, the teacher can choose from an array of activities designated to help students to develop through these stages toward intercultural competence. Bennett et al. include a table of recommended activities for learners in the various stages of language competence and cultural sensitivity. For instance, the teacher may choose a proverb or a magazine activity with learners in the Minimization stage. Students in the Adaptation stage may complete cultural simulations or produce guided narratives that focus on cultural clashes they have personally experienced. A tremendous benefit, as Bennett et al. note, is that any skills developed at a particular stage can be generalized to other types of cultural differences (p. 11).

Ortuño (1991) describes a second theory-based model, using the Kluckhohn taxonomy of value orientations as the organizing principle for analyzing culture. The taxonomy is structured with five value-orientations dimensions, which Kluckhohn identified as being universal: Activity, Human Nature, Person-Nature, Human Relations, and Time. Attitudes in each of these dimensions range along a continuum. For instance, in the Activity dimension, values range from placing most importance on *doing*, *being-in-becoming*, or *being*. The *doing/acting/accomplishing* points on the continuum emphasize concrete rewards for a group or an individual; the *being-in-becoming* points emphasize self-development of the individual; and *being* orientations emphasize spontaneous action for individual or group gratification. Perspectives on Human Nature range from humankind seen as evil; neutral; a mixture of good and evil; or good. The value orientations regarding a Person's relationship to Nature range from living in subjugation to nature; to living in harmony with nature; to mastery over nature. Value orientation preferences for Human Relations range from collaterality (consensus and reciprocity); to lineality (hierarchy and authority in the group); to individualism (independent actions and decisions). Lastly, Time orientations range from past (traditions); to present (accommodating changes now); to future (seeking out change; goals) (Ortuño, 1991, p. 450). Students gain insight into their own culture while analyzing how the target culture(s) express their values regarding Activity, Human Nature, etc.

This model, says Ortuño, helps the teacher guide learners through a process in which they reevaluate their own social identity in terms of the new system presented by the world language and the culture(s) associated with it. Activities can include analysis of cultural notes in a text regarding attitudes of the world language speakers regarding, for instance, social status, friendship, courtesy, or punctuality. Students can contrast their home culture and the world language culture in terms of one or more of the five value dimensions. The same activity can be completed with proverbs from the home culture and the TL culture. Ortuño has found that differences in behaviors and values can be quickly analyzed and understood in the Kluckhohn framework, which emphasizes the concept that this is one community's particular response to a certain issue, among a range of possible responses (Ortuño, 2000, p. 152).

My own students often expand their insights when, in conjunction with the Kluckhohn Model, they work with the *Outline of Cultural Materials (OCM)* (Human Relations Area Files, 2004). The *OCM* demonstrates the extent to which our lives are culture-infused. For example, for entries on the family, there are hundreds of sub-categories. Of these, “Status of children,” has an additional list of nine cross-references, including “Kin relationships, Age stratification, Marriageability of children, Concept of legal majority” (*OCM*, p. xi). These subcategories and cross-references, in conjunction with the curriculum area being studied, can be converted into questions that the student can research. For example, students might compare and contrast the responsibilities and status of older and younger children in target cultures. Students interview native speakers in person or via pen pals or key-pals to gather information.

A third model is particularly suitable for FLES students. Pesola (1997) discusses the use of thematic units, grounded in Egan’s mythic (4-10 years old) and romantic stages (8-15 years old) of learning. These stages or layers are components of what Egan considers to be a four-stage educational process. During the process, the child develops increasingly sophisticated abilities for understanding the world and the human experience. The mythic layer concerns itself with understanding the world through emotional and moral means; the romantic layer involves exploring the limits of the real and possible vs. the romantic (Curtain & Pesola, p. 66-71). Pesola’s model has the distinct advantage of permitting the integration of many areas of the total elementary curriculum with language and culture. Folk tales and contemporary children’s literature can easily incorporate elements of the curriculum for social studies, science, math, language arts, music, and art into a thematic unit. (Lesson plans for these models are available at <http://www.csuohio.edu/mod-languages/wilberschied.htm>.)

The models will “help students to *expect* differences,” to analyze them, to understand them, and to respect them (National Standards, p. 49). Thus, they are tremendous aids in developing the lack of fear of strangers. Once our students have developed the degree of intercultural competence that permits them to display philoxenia, they must be encouraged to develop in yet another area—becoming advocates for their own futures. One function of their advocacy is to convey to others the advantages of understanding cultural differences.

### **How Understanding Can Be an Advantage**

“Oliver Wendell Holmes’ contention that the human mind, once stretched to a new idea, never returns to its former dimension (*The Autocrat at the Breakfast Table*) underscores the benefits that the study of cultures through their own language can bring.” (National Standards, p. 47)

To delineate the advantages of studying languages and cultures for our students would be redundant because it is a well-known part of the conversation among ourselves. We must develop the courage to send our students out as

advocates; in order to do so, we must model advocacy ourselves. In other words, instead of speaking further to the choir, we must transform the choir into preachers. We may find motivation in the idea that this area of studies is no longer merely an advantage but an urgent necessity for our students, our community, and our nation.

### **Applications of the Theory**

It is increasingly clear that people must strive to better understand those who are culturally different as well as to make ourselves better known to others. This will be no simple feat given what we know about the manner in which people learn about others. (Cushner, p. iv)

Students who initially do not perceive the dangers of isolationism and xenophobia will gain insight during development of their intercultural competency. Discussions during this process can help students develop stronger skills in critical thinking. The next step for them, with the help of supportive teachers and role models, will be to turn themselves into credible advocates of study of international languages and cultures. Acceptable strategies do not rule out the gratifying performances at assemblies, PTA meetings, and holiday programs. The exigency of our national situation, however, dictates the need for advocacy that goes beyond public relations. Students can help convince others that our students' performance and our nation's economic and human security require an urgent emphasis on this critical task" (*World-Class*). A few strategies to support students will include finding allies, focusing on the ballot and the purse, and befriending the local entrepreneur.

*1. Finding allies.* After speaking with members of the Parent-Teachers organization, students could speak with individual community members who are approachable. Would they be willing to sponsor one or more students in travel or study, or to underwrite supplemental activities or materials for classes? Would they be willing to finance advocacy events? Would they be willing to act as spokespersons for efforts to develop intercultural competency in our students? Would they be allies in other ways?

Students could interview residents of their neighborhood who have immigrated from or traveled to countries where the language is spoken. Members of the local genealogical society can also provide fascinating immigration stories. The questions can probe beyond the surface if they are generated as described in the earlier section on *Outline of Cultural Materials* (see Website for further suggestions). Students could create a presentation and/or display to appear in local libraries, the chamber of commerce, and city hall. An ongoing column in a local newspaper is an excellent medium for such stories and provides regular opportunities for advocacy.

*2. Focusing on the ballot and the purse.* Other students could,

along with their teacher, visit community organizations, representatives, and legislators, air the *World-Class* or another video that has been found to be effective, and share their own experiences and thoughts. The Asia Society remarks that their video can be used by school boards, legislative groups, business groups, world affairs councils, and other organizations to trigger community forum discussions on the growing strategic economic and educational importance of international knowledge and skills.

3. *Befriending the local entrepreneur.* Activities that are engaging for students can also begin an ongoing relationship with community business owners. Students can embark upon a scavenger hunt to various merchants in order to learn which of the products they carry are internationally manufactured, or which locally manufactured products are made with components produced in foreign countries. Samples of the products as well as posters of the compiled information could be put on display in a library or city hall showcase, on local cable channels, and on municipal websites. The local merchants gain some free advertising, and the exhibits convey an implicit validation of the study of language and culture. Explicit validation could be conveyed with quotes from various merchants who state their views on world language and culture study. (Note: It is wise for the teacher to contact business owners informally, in advance, to ask whether they would mind being surveyed, and to review the goals of such an activity with students, along with guidelines for conduct.) Members of the business community who have international ties can be effective allies in planning a local international culture appreciation fair or celebration day. This activity and others can be planned as part of an allied effort with social studies, economics, and business faculty to establish an International Business Club. Fund-raising activities could support study-abroad candidates and could involve the community in shadowing and mentoring activities.

Students interested in state-level initiatives could study initiatives in other states and follow up by proposing appropriate initiatives for their state. State foreign language associations may provide grants for such efforts, and further funding might be found with state Chambers of Commerce or governors' offices. (See, for example, those of Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Oklahoma, Virginia, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and others at <http://www.internationalead.org/language.htm>.)

It is especially important to stress, during the course of such initiatives, the economic importance of such competencies. Many legislators, administrators, and other decision-makers cite lack of funds as the reason for the absence of the needed programs. It is worth the attempt to demonstrate the potential economic losses if present trends continue. A list of some potential resources to aid students in their efforts follows the References section.

### **Conclusion: the Benefits of Fostering Philoxenia**

Foreign language professionals in this country have, for generations, been adept at marketing. It is compellingly clear that we have gone beyond the point

of needing to promote foreign language and culture study for the curricular and research-based reasons that we have been citing for years. We must foster philoxenia in order to prepare students to live in a rapidly changing world. For them and for those with whom we share this world, we cannot guarantee the aesthetic, material/economic, personal/health, and societal benefits that some of the previous generations have taken for granted. In this Year of Languages, our message to the American public can be clear and unwavering. We must support our children as they gain these competencies. We must advocate for the lack of fear that comes from understanding “the stranger” who shares more and more of our lives. Such understanding will have to extend far beyond the Year of Languages. As a national population, if we can assimilate this new idea, we will never be the same.

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*A Village of 100* (Available from [http://www.trainerstoolchest.com/show\\_product.php?idnum=380](http://www.trainerstoolchest.com/show_product.php?idnum=380) )



## **Section 2**

### **Challenges in PK-20 World Language Education**

#### **Effecting Change Both Within and Beyond the Profession**

Marty Abbott  
Audrey-Heining-Boynnton



#### **Ignorance Is Not Bliss: The Critical Importance of U.S. Foreign Language Education in the 21st Century**

Keiran Dunne

#### **Preparing Future Foreign Language Teachers through Digital Portfolio Initiatives**

Christopher Luke

#### **Core? You Bet! Advocating for World Language Programs in the Age of Accountability**

Debbie Robinson & Charles Conway

#### **The Challenge of Language Learning in Wyoming**

Brandee Mau

#### **L-LINCC: Choosing Electronic Networking for Collaborative Communities**

Rebecca Chism

#### **Finding a Place in the Core: The Ongoing Challenge to World Languages in an Urban School District**

Gaëlle Berg



# Effecting Change Both Within and Beyond the Profession

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**Marty G. Abbott**

American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages

**Audrey L. Heining-Boynton**

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

The national effort *2005: The Year of Languages* will do much to change the public perception about learning languages and will provide a kick off for a long-term public relations effort to change the way Americans view languages in the context of their daily lives, whether for school, work, or leisure. In the meantime, however, critical challenges remain in the PK-20 education arena, and it is incumbent upon the profession as a whole and the individual teacher and professor to continue to work at the challenges within the academic setting while keeping in mind the need to effect change beyond the classroom. This chapter will identify the challenges as well as provide recommendations for remedying or, at the very least, improving the situation.

## Ensuring language in the curriculum

### *Challenge:*

*To ensure a seamless progression of language study for all, beginning in preschool and continuing through higher education in order that language learners have the opportunity to reach high levels of language proficiency.*

Recent reports, such as the National Association of State Boards of Education's *The Complete Curriculum: Ensuring a Place for the Arts and Foreign Languages in America's Schools* (2003), provide concrete data to indicate that languages are losing ground in the curriculum across the nation. The most recent survey conducted by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) indicates that only 33.8% of students enrolled in America's secondary schools are studying languages. As the only industrialized nation that routinely graduates students from high school with the knowledge of only one language, these numbers are disturbing. While a study conducted by the Center for Applied Linguistics indicates that between 1987 and 1997 there was a 10% increase in elementary school enrollments, it is common knowledge that the majority of elementary students across the nation are not afforded the opportunity to learn languages in school. Given

the current emphasis of the *No Child Left Behind* legislation on mathematics and reading, it does not seem likely that there will be significant change in the near future. That is, not unless the language profession maps out a strategic approach to counter the forces that work against ensuring that every student in the United States is given the opportunity to learn a language in addition to English.

Creating such a map would necessitate policies developed that would include all levels of education beginning with preschool and continuing through the four year undergraduate degree. Our educational system in the United States has evolved into a series of graduation requirements, in particular between high school and college, and then for college undergraduate and advanced degrees. The late 1980s and early 1990s witnessed a rise in the number of universities requiring at least two years of high school foreign language for admission. Additionally, many colleges and universities have language requirements for graduation. The challenge is that the requirements are translated in terms of courses and not in terms of levels of proficiency. Because of an extreme lack of consistency among college programs, an individual can graduate from College X as a language major and only have an Intermediate or lower level of proficiency. Imagine the potentially low level of language proficiency of someone who has combined language study with another discipline from College Y, having taken only a few language courses. The same can hold true for students who begin language learning at an early age, and because of non-articulated programs, their level of language ability by the time they graduate from high school remains extremely low. Their proficiency is not indicative of the number of years they have studied the language.

### **Recommendations:**

- **Capitalize on the 2005: *The Year of Languages* campaign to provide information about the benefits of language learning to policy makers and decision makers in our school systems.** Concerted efforts, not just to inform but to convince those who make decisions about what students will learn, should be led by the language profession.
- **Rally parents as advocates for languages.** The primary audience that can effect change in both the public and private school arenas are the tax/tuition payers, the parents. They are firm advocates for whatever they deem necessary to give their children the edge in the workplace of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Engaging parents in this campaign is necessary in order to see progress. National associations as well as local parent organizations need to be galvanized toward the goal of ensuring languages in the curriculum and study abroad opportunities at the college level. In the *2005: The Year of Languages* campaign, the focus for the month of August is on parents, and there will be a major emphasis on informing this constituent group about the benefits of language study for their children.
- **Provide research that indicates the important cognitive and social**

**benefits of language learning.** While there is some research available, more is needed that will resonate with parents and administrators. The language profession should identify areas that are needed and foster long term studies of these benefits. The federal government should be encouraged to aid in this effort by providing funding to support these research efforts. With the NCLB requirement that funded programs be based on scientifically-based research, we cannot stand by and not assist our schools by providing adequate research. The arts educators have provided research that clearly shows that a school without the arts makes Johnny a dull boy. We need to make the same case, that a curriculum without languages makes Johnny unprepared to live and work in a global society. And the important point is that whether Johnny ever travels outside the United States or not, having the language learning experience will help him not only to develop insight into his own language and culture, but also to be better prepared to interact with those in his own community whose first language is not English.

- **Encourage PreK-16 schools to work together to create well-articulated programs that support effective teaching and learning.** Several federal grant programs have funded collaborations with PreK-16 schools located in close proximity to create well-articulated and effective language curricula. These successful programs have offered strong professional development support for the PreK-12 teachers and have worked to build bridges in particular between the high school and the higher education teaching professionals. Although funding is beneficial, these programs can also take shape in the form of collaborative partnerships. One of the first and perhaps the most important steps is for the teachers and professors to become acquainted and to work together on similar initiatives. State language associations can provide the vehicle to bring these parties together. And with well-articulated programs come the expectations of high levels of language proficiency on the part of both the learners and their parents.

### **Effecting Change from within the Profession**

#### ***Challenge:***

*Expect high levels of learner proficiency at each benchmark.*

Despite the fact that the standards for foreign language learning have been used as the underpinning for every national initiative since they were released in 1996 (see footnote), there has not been a correlated change in the classroom to reflect standards-based instruction and assessment. The standards are based on the notion that the language classroom should be a place where students learn to communicate about important topics that are meaningful to them, learn to understand the important cultural points of view and related products and practices, learn about the connections to other subject areas,

develop insight into their own language and culture, and see the important uses of language beyond the classroom. One of the most significant challenges remains to ensure that the standards are integrated into instruction in classrooms across America. It is only through a standards-based approach to instruction that we will begin to see higher levels of proficiency among students. Because a standards-based approach focuses on how well students can communicate in the language, or interpret the written language in the case of Latin, it is only with this goal in mind that we as a profession will begin to “produce” confident and competent users of the language. Under the Communication goal of the standards, the three modes of communication—interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational—were designed to promote the development of communicative skills to replace the traditional focus on isolated skills of listening, reading, writing, and speaking. It is incumbent on each of us as language educators to examine how significantly we have changed the focus in our classrooms. We will never convince the public of the necessity of language learning for all unless we are able to produce able users of the language who are motivated to continue their study.

And this does not mean only in the K-12 classroom, but also at the college level. Although the standards were originally crafted for the K-12 school population, the National Foreign Language Standards can and in some cases have revolutionized the teaching of languages at the college level. More inclusion of the standards needs to occur across all levels of the undergraduate as well as graduate teaching of languages. Along with improved instructional delivery on the part of college courses comes the expectation of high levels of language proficiency upon graduation from a four year college program or graduate level program. These high expectations go hand in hand with the fact that institutions of higher education need to encourage applications from students who have had a long sequence of language learning at the PreK-12 levels. These students would then be placed in upper level courses to continue their advancement in the language or languages.

### **Recommendations**

- **Provide professional development that is based on the standards and provides teachers with training on developing standards-based curriculum, delivering standards-based instruction, and conducting standards-based assessments.** One of the underlying goals of the national campaign *2005: The Year of Languages* is to heighten the awareness among funders at the federal level as to the need for professional development in this area. As a profession, we can examine our own state frameworks, local curricula, and courses of study to ensure that we are promoting a standards-driven approach to language teaching.
- **Encourage teachers from all levels to meet and discuss expectations**

**in order to provide a seamless articulation from one level to the next.** Articulation meetings can be initiated by educators from any level, elementary, middle, high, or postsecondary. The important element is that these groups meet on a regular basis to discuss student expectations and progress. Communication is the key, with no representatives from one level dictating to another. The goals and expectations should be reached as a collaborative effort with each group seeking to understand the learner variables at each level of instruction.

- **Develop national assessments for languages that can be easily and inexpensively administered by the classroom teacher but measured against a national standard.** Since assessments drive instruction, having a national assessment that language educators can use to measure the progress of their students will be an important step in advancing a standards-based program. The traditional way of measuring progress through “seat time” that translates into credits must give way to a more accountable measure of student performance. This must be accomplished in a collaborative process that involves an examination of existing assessment instruments so that in the most cost- and time-effective way, a national assessment instrument can be made available at all instructional levels. This would aid at the college level as well since it will assist with placement of freshmen or transfer students into the appropriate advanced level courses for students with prior language experiences.

### **Effecting Change beyond the Profession**

#### ***Challenge:***

*Coordinating academe with the business, government, and humanitarian sectors to educate citizens who are able to contribute to our world communities and economies.*

On a day-to-day basis, it is very easy for educators to lose sight of the big picture. Why are we teaching languages in our preK-16 schools? Why do we firmly believe that studying a language is of utmost importance? Because we know the value of being able to communicate in a wide array of languages at all levels. Children use other languages to communicate with their friends at school and in their neighborhoods. Adults are consumers of languages for their social and business needs.

It is therefore imperative that we keep the ultimate needs and uses of languages in mind when we are developing not only our yearly objectives but also our daily lesson plans. **2005: *The Year of Languages*** with its monthly focus was designed to assist language educators at the local level with areas of emphasis that they could use to publicize the benefits and importance of language learning. As the context for education reform continues to focus on accountability measures for students, teachers, and administrators, it is

important that all language educators work to ensure that languages are included in the accountability program. Language educators must ask the question of whether or not their students are making progress in building their language proficiency in a way that can be measured. While in many states there are no language requirements for students in preK-12 or in higher education, it is important to create our own accountability measures such as the national assessment mentioned above. If we are proactive in this area by developing our own measures of language success, we can avoid the possibility of having something imposed on us from outside our profession.

### **Recommendations:**

- **Take advantage of the Year of Languages and the long term campaign to promote languages to both create and then operationalize policies for language learning that begin at the highest level of our government.** The monthly focus for January was on Language Policy, and representative groups from academe, business, and government met at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to discuss ways to advance the language policy agenda. A white paper that may be accessed at [www.yearoflanguages.org](http://www.yearoflanguages.org) was written with concrete recommendations in this area. A sustained effort to follow up on these recommendations must be made.
- **Create alliances with local businesses, government, and with the humanitarian agencies to review frequently their needs and how we are preparing their future employees to live and work in a global society.** As a result of the National Language Policy Summit mentioned above, many state and local efforts have resulted as language educators bring together representatives of these arenas in their own communities to discuss how to operationalize policies in their own states and local governments.

### **Note**

The following national initiatives have used the National Standards for Foreign Language Education as the basis for their standards, project or initiative: National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is the “Nation’s Report Card” and was scheduled for administration in 2005; National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) standards were developed to accredit teacher education programs; Interstate New Teachers Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC), a project of the National Council of Chief State School Officers, developed standards for new teacher licensure; National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) developed standards for giving national board certification to accomplished teachers.

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# Ignorance Is Not Bliss: The Critical Importance of U.S. Foreign Language Education in the 21st Century

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**Keiran Dunne**  
Kent State University

The past two decades have witnessed an unprecedented transformation of international communications. The commoditization of the PC and the advent of the Internet have ushered in an era of revolutionary personal and business connectivity, and in so doing have collapsed distance and geography. Thanks to computers and the Internet, people from across the world can interact as easily as if they were across town.

The Internet revolution has fueled profound shifts in the ways companies conduct business. The emergence of the Web, a borderless electronic “Eighth Continent” (DePalma, 2002, p. vii) inhabited by almost a billion online consumers and business users worldwide, has not only vastly increased the size of potential markets, but also leveled the global playing field. Companies no longer need to maintain a physical “brick-and-mortar” presence abroad in order to address international markets. Web sites offer a low-cost global advertising, marketing, and support platform, and even provide international sales and distribution channels for products such as software that can be delivered electronically.

The Web has thus “democratized” access to international markets, allowing even small companies to advertise themselves, their products and services to a potentially global audience. However, enhanced global access comes at the price of heightened global competition.

Competitors at home and abroad—including new entrants attracted by technological convergence, new business opportunities, or the need to reposition their existing activities—can also take advantage of this technology. In other words: while the pond has grown in size, so have the number, type and size of the fish swimming in it” (Localization Industry Standards Association [LISA], 2003, p. 9).

Thus, while international e-commerce presents U.S. companies with unique opportunities, it also presents unique challenges, foremost among them linguistic and cultural barriers. An English-only approach is anachronistic on the Eighth Continent, especially in the business-to-consumer products market, since the majority of the world’s population does not speak English and 65% of Web users are native speakers of languages other than English (Global Reach, 2004). Moreover, the relative percentage of online English speakers

will continue to drop as an increasing proportion of the global population goes on line.

Successful marketing must take place in the language of the target market. As former West German Chancellor Willy Brandt observed, “If I’m selling to you, I speak your language. If I’m buying, *dann müssen Sie Deutsch sprechen.*” However, beating international competitors at their own game requires more than excellent interpretation of sales presentations and/or accurate translation of product documentation. To successfully compete in the global on-demand economy, companies must adapt their products and services to fit the needs of the local market in terms of language, culture, functionality, work practices, as well as legal and regulatory requirements. Paradoxically, “being truly global is only possible by being local in the markets where companies do business” (LISA, 2003, p. 3). Localization is achieved by “combining language and technology to produce a product that can cross cultural and language barriers” (Esselink, 2003, p. 4).

The business imperative to simultaneously globalize and localize has fueled an explosive demand for translation and adaptation of materials in an ever-increasing variety of media and formats including not only traditional printed documents, but also software, Web sites, video games, online tutorials, and multimedia presentations. In response to this burgeoning demand for “translation on the computer for the computer” (van der Meer, 1995, p. 14), a new language industry has arisen to provide companies with the services they need to effectively localize, sell, and support their products worldwide. The localization industry is comprised of a number of new interdisciplinary, specialized language-related professions, including software internationalization and localization specialists and engineers, multilingual project managers, multilingual desktop publishing specialists, terminologists, localization testers, and quality assurance specialists.

Driven by the global commercial expansion of the PC and the Internet, localization has evolved into a multi-billion dollar industry in the space of little more than a decade. Although acknowledging that “hard data is difficult to come by given the youth, dynamic growth and global reach of the industry” (LISA, 2003, p. 6), LISA estimates the total size of the localization industry at approximately USD \$5 billion per annum (LISA, 2003, p. 18). This number will undoubtedly grow. As barriers to international markets diminish, more and more companies will face the difficulties of translating and adapting their products and services for other locales.

In March, 2002, no doubt in recognition of the important role international e-commerce is expected to play in the national economy over the medium term and long term, the U.S. General Accounting Office issued a report entitled *International electronic commerce*. “The rapid growth in the use of Internet-based computer technologies over the past several years has significant implications for the United States,” notes Loren Yager, Director of International Affairs and Trade for the U.S. General Accounting Office in the preface to the report (2004, p. 1).

Indeed, in the increasingly integrated global economy, multilingualism and cross-cultural communication have strategic implications for the future economic well-being of the United States. However, despite the increasingly strategic importance of foreign languages in the realm of business and industry, demand for qualified language professionals far exceeds the available supply. According to the U.S. Department of Labor's *Occupation outlook handbook, 2004-05 edition*:

Employment of interpreters and translators is projected to grow faster than the average for all occupations over the 2002-12 period, reflecting growth in the industries employing interpreters and translators. Higher demand for interpreters and translators in recent years has resulted directly from the broadening of international ties and the increase in foreign language speakers in the United States. Both of these trends are expected to continue, contributing to relatively rapid growth in the number of jobs for interpreters and translators (2004b, Interpreters and translators).

Moreover, the statistics on which this analysis is based reveal a structural imbalance between supply and demand. On one hand, the Department of Labor's *Occupational projections and training data, 2004-05 edition* projects that employment in the fields of translation and interpretation will grow by 22% over the 2002-12 period, which represents ranking of "very high" (2004a, p. 82). On the other hand, this same document notes that a total of nine Bachelor's degrees, 138 Master's degrees, and no doctoral degrees were awarded in the fields of foreign language interpretation and translation across the United States in 2001-02 (2004a, p. 27) and observes that the most significant source of postsecondary education or training remains "long-term on-the-job training" (2004a, p. 26).

This disparity between supply and demand is exacerbated by the current state of U.S. foreign language education in which holistic approaches and languages across the curriculum remain the exception, rather than the rule. Underscoring the extent to which language study is isolated from science and technology, for example, is the fact that only one undergraduate program in the nation currently offers the Bachelor of Science in Translation program, namely Kent State University in Ohio.

Available data suggest that the gap between demand and available supply of appropriately trained language professionals will continue to widen over the next decade. Domestic online sales tracked by the U.S. government in the *Estimated quarterly U.S. retail e-commerce sales* report have shown double-digit growth every quarter since tracking began and have consistently surpassed 20 percent since the third quarter of 2001 (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2004). The U.S. government does not track international e-commerce statistics. Nevertheless, the 2002 General Accounting Office report, *International electronic commerce*, notes that "Forrester Research, Inc. is the only research firm that produces estimates and forecasts for international

electronic commerce. Although international electronic commerce accounts for a small fraction of international trade at present, Forrester predicts that international electronic commerce will experience rapid growth. (2002, p. 11). In the absence of concerted efforts and strong policies to promote the study of foreign languages for the professions, the shortage of qualified language professionals will continue to worsen.

The rise of the Internet and the advent of international e-commerce is one facet of a larger phenomenon, i.e., the gradual trend toward international economic, political, technological, and social integration known as globalization has marked the late 20th and early 21st centuries. As United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan has observed, globalization is “an irreversible process, not an option. It is a positive force, but it is also blind and therefore needs to be carefully harnessed” (Annan, 1999). In the increasingly integrated global economy, language and cultural proficiency play an ever more important role in the economic health of cities, states, and the nation as a whole.

However, the structural imbalance between demand and supply of skilled language professionals suggests that the U.S. educational infrastructure is currently ill-equipped to prepare interdisciplinary, multilingual students to meet the global economic demands of the 21st century. Over the medium and long term, the relative inability of U.S. companies to find qualified employees who possess the requisite language skills will hinder the ability of companies to successfully compete in the global economy. Extrapolated to the national level, the inability to effectively communicate in languages other than English will undermine the nation’s ability to compete internationally.

In conclusion, foreign language education has important implications for national security, and as the foregoing analysis demonstrates, these implications are not confined to the realm of September 11, 2001. As such, it is incumbent upon the country’s leaders to formulate a cohesive, coherent national policy that recognizes the critical importance of foreign language proficiency and cross-cultural communication in the 21st century and that addresses the gap between the demand and available supply of appropriately trained language professionals. In order to close this gap, U.S. colleges and universities must develop and implement advanced training programs that focus on language for the professions. However, faculty with expertise in the development of specialized advanced language skills for use in non-academic professional careers are very difficult to find because there are currently no doctoral programs producing them. This structural problem requires a structural solution, namely the creation of doctoral programs in translation and interpretation research and pedagogy. By creating a cadre of professionally trained teachers and researchers, such doctoral programs will help meet the growing need for translation and interpretation faculty as more colleges and universities add such programs. Likewise, doctoral programs are needed in the fields of localization and language informatics, multilingual document engineering, and computational linguistics to train the researchers and scientists who will apply information technology and computer science to language-

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# Preparing Future Foreign Language Teachers through Digital Portfolio Initiatives

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**Christopher Luke**  
Ball State University

Over the past few years a number of state and national standards have been developed for pre-service and practicing foreign language educators. More and more, teachers are required to demonstrate their pedagogical and methodological competence through standards-based assessments (NCATE, 2002). In many states, expectations and standards for beginning teachers are derived from the national Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) Principles (1992). The ten INTASC Principles elaborately prescribe what new teachers should know and be able to do in terms of knowledge, performances, and dispositions. Additionally, current and future teachers are expected to be familiar with and able to effectively incorporate educational technology into their classrooms (*National Educational Technology Standards for Teachers*, Preparing Teachers to Use Technology, 2002 ). In order to adequately document and demonstrate teacher candidates' growth and development in terms of content knowledge, instructional techniques, and instructional technology, a number of colleges and universities have incorporated digital portfolio projects in their education programs.

## **Digital Portfolios**

As an assessment tool, the portfolio has become progressively more popular, particularly when it comes to evaluating beginning teachers and teacher candidates (Hammadou, 1996; Hammadou Sullivan, 2004; Wright, Knight, & Pomerleau, 1999). Portfolios provide a framework for documenting, organizing, and reflecting on teaching and learning processes. Through portfolios teacher candidates are able to assume increased ownership of their work, collaborate with peers and instructors, strengthen connections between theory and practice, demonstrate growth, and assume responsibility for learning through critical self-reflection (Barton, 1993; Mullen, Britten, & McFadden, 2005).

As with more traditional paper-based portfolios, digital portfolios allow candidates to showcase their developing content and pedagogical knowledge over time. One of the added benefits of digital portfolios, though, is that they enable teacher candidates to learn how to use technology and also how to teach with technology (Mullen et al., 2005). The interactive characteristics of digital media further provide “the potential to bring a depth and richness” (Mullen et

al., p. 29) not possible with traditional portfolios. Hawisher and Selfe (1997) emphasize that digital portfolios “provide a new kind of space for intellectual work and opportunities to connect and represent that intellectual work in new ways” (p. 306). In states where licensing and certification requirements for foreign language teachers are increasingly performance-based, the digital portfolio can be a means for future language teachers to simultaneously meet performance standards, highlight their language abilities, and demonstrate technology capabilities. The portfolios allow candidates to display language, teaching, and technology skills in dynamic, multimedia environments that are easily transportable and accessible online from across the entire world.

### **The Current Study**

While there are a number of digital portfolio initiatives already underway, Hammadou Sullivan (2004) stresses that continued research is still necessary and that “it would be beneficial to hear directly from candidates—what they hoped to convey about themselves and their teaching” (p. 399). The data presented here come from a larger, ongoing longitudinal study that focuses on the implementation of a digital portfolio initiative at a mid-major university in the Midwest.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions for this study are: (a) what role do digital portfolios play in the development of foreign language teachers, (b) how do digital portfolios contribute to foreign language teachers’ preparation for their careers, and (c) how do students perceive and respond to digital portfolio initiatives? The intent of this article is to provide some insights regarding the third question on how teacher candidates perceive and respond to a digital portfolio requirement.

### **Digital Portfolio Artifacts**

The digital portfolios associated with this study have a number of mandatory common components. Teacher candidates are required to include their résumé, their teaching philosophy, and a resource page that contains links to other valuable websites, sample lesson plans, academic content standards, and reflections, artifacts, and rationales for each of the ten INTASC Principles. Computer technology and the multimedia capabilities of the Internet also allow foreign language teacher candidates to incorporate other web pages, PowerPoint presentations on language and culture, digital video of their teaching experiences, and digital audio demonstrating language skills into their portfolios. The wireless environment on campus enables students to quickly and easily update their work and then post it to the World Wide Web where

it becomes available to other students, instructors, and potential employers.

The construction and maintenance of the digital portfolios is facilitated by a number of human and technology resources on campus. There are numerous “general” computer labs where students can work on their own. Furthermore, there are labs dedicated to producing and editing digital audio and video, as well as one lab designated as a digital portfolio development and support center. Candidates have access to digital cameras, digital camcorders, scanners, and other technology components. Technology training typically begins in the introductory education courses where students learn the basics of webpage design. Additional training and technology support for both faculty and students is available through other courses, workshops, and resource centers.

### **Candidates’ Reactions to and Perceptions of the Digital Portfolio Initiative**

During Fall 2003 and Spring 2004, 21 students with declared foreign language teaching majors (in various languages) began developing their digital portfolios in an introductory foreign language education course. Of the 21 students, 17 elected to participate in the study. The majority of the participants were freshman and sophomores. Data presented in this article come from an anonymous survey administered near the end of each semester. The complete survey is comprised of 31 items separated into five categories: technology, teacher education, professional development, career opportunities, and personal reactions and benefits. Items particularly germane to students’ perceptions and reactions to the portfolio initiative are outlined in the tables below. All items utilize the following key: SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, N = Neither Agree nor Disagree, D = Disagree, and SD = Strongly Disagree.

Of all survey items, the first item in the technology section resulted in the highest mean, with an overwhelming majority of the respondents (n=12) strongly agreeing that developing digital portfolios helped to increase their general technology skills. Furthermore, students indicated that they were more comfortable with technology as a result of digital portfolio work and many

**Table 1**  
**Technology**

Category: Technology n = 17	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Mean
1. Developing a digital portfolio has helped to increase my technology skills.	12	3	2			4.59
2. I am more comfortable with computer technology as a result of developing a digital portfolio.	8	5	2	2		4.12
3. I would feel comfortable designing a web page for my foreign language students.	6	8	2	1		4.12
4. I intend to develop a web page for my students when I have a teaching position.	2	6	9			3.99

felt comfortable in designing a web page for their own students. However, fewer respondents indicated that they actually intended to design such a page.

The second section of the survey focused on how the digital portfolio projects impact teacher education. Participants were asked to rate the overall importance of the initiative as well as what knowledge, skills, and abilities could be demonstrated through their portfolios.

**Table 2**  
**Teacher Education**

Approximately 2/3 of the respondents agreed that developing a digital portfolio

Category: Teacher Education n = 17	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Mean
1. Developing digital portfolios is an important part of teacher education.	1	10	4	2		3.59
2. My digital portfolio allows me to show my skills and abilities as a teacher.	4	10	1	2		3.94
3. My digital portfolio allows me to show my knowledge of my content area.	2	9	5	1		3.71
4. My digital portfolio allows me to show my knowledge of teaching principles and standards.	5	11	1			4.24

is an important part of a teacher education program. In terms of what students felt they could demonstrate through their portfolios, knowledge of teaching principles and standards (the INTASC Principles) had the highest mean (4.24), followed by skills and abilities as a teacher (3.94), and then by knowledge of the content area (3.71). The lower mean for content area knowledge may be attributed to a number of factors. First, at this particular university content area faculty have less involvement with the digital portfolio project than education faculty. A number of faculty members serve as teaching major advisors, but beyond those few the rest of the foreign language department is rather disconnected from teacher education. Second, very few content area faculty actually assess students' digital portfolios. The portfolios are most often reviewed by education professors who typically have little experience with language teaching and learning. This disconnect between the content area faculty, the students, and the education faculty is an area where increased collaboration is necessary to ensure that students' portfolios reflect both their teaching skills and their content area expertise.

In her recent work on identifying the best foreign language teachers, Hammadou Sullivan (2004) points out that nearly all principals and foreign language department chairs view portfolios as an important instrument to be used when hiring new teachers and faculty members. However, in the survey many respondents indicated uncertainty about showing their portfolios to potential employers and questioned whether the portfolio would help them obtain employment. This is perhaps, then, another area where increased communication is necessary among potential employers, education faculty, and students regarding the uses of the portfolios and appropriate contents. Finally, as an overarching assessment of the digital portfolio initiative,

16 of the 17 respondents agreed or strongly agreed that developing a digital portfolio has benefited them in their preparation to become a foreign language teacher.

**Table 3**  
**Career Opportunities**

Category: Career Opportunities	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Mean
1. I would feel comfortable showing my digital portfolio to potential employers.	4	6	5	2		3.71
2. I think my digital portfolio will help me to find employment as a teacher.	3	6	7	1		3.65
3. Developing a digital portfolio has benefited me as I prepare to become a teacher.	3	13	1			4.12

### Directions for Further Research

As Hammadou Sullivan (2004) notes, there are still important avenues of research involving digital teaching portfolios. Larger sample sizes are necessary to enable statistical analysis, and first-hand accounts by administrators, teachers, and teacher candidates will help to create linkages between universities and public schools and further best methods practices. This particular longitudinal study, which began in Fall 2003, is scheduled to continue for approximately six years. The length of the study will allow two full cohorts of teacher candidates to experience the entire process from freshman to senior year and then continue through the first two years of teaching. Data from the study will yield valuable information on how the digital portfolio initiative impacts pre-service teachers' academic careers, their preparation for the teaching profession, and their first few years as regular classroom teachers.

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# Core? You Bet!

## Advocating for World Language Programs in the Age of Accountability

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Debbie Robinson

Charles Conway

Ohio Department of Education

The intent of this article is to provide Foreign Language educators at all levels of instruction with a print-ready advocacy tool to inform non-Foreign Language educators about the contributions World Language programs make to the total school curriculum. Explicit ties to the Foreign Language Standards along with specific examples will help make everyone believe in the value of World Languages as core.

### The Problem

The *No Child Left Behind Act* (2002) has changed the educational landscape dramatically. Districts need to show that students are making adequate yearly progress on large-scale assessments as part of strict accountability measures. As a result, **all** areas of the curriculum must demonstrate how they help improve student achievement through a focus on literacy and analytical skills.

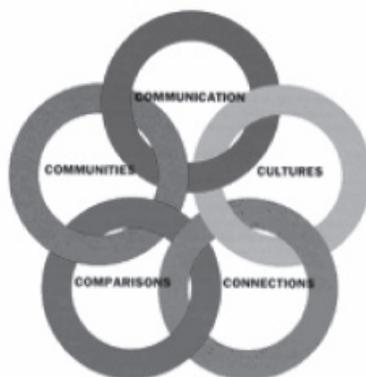
Within the present context, World Languages have been marginalized, despite their designation as a core discipline in *NCLB* and at the state level. Programs at the middle and elementary school levels are being cut, and diverse language offerings at the secondary level are declining. Simply put, the teaching of languages other than English has not been viewed as being aligned to the skills delineated in *NCLB*. Yet, report after report (e.g., Council for Basic Education, 2004; National Association of State Boards of Education, 2003) highlights the need for a well-rounded education, with continuation and expansion of programs in all of the liberal arts, including World Languages.

Research results from the past 40 years consistently conclude that students who study a Foreign Language equal or surpass their monolingual peers on standardized tests of achievement. Students demonstrate increased cognitive flexibility, are more creative, and are more open to others. For the college bound, SAT/ACT scores are higher than those of students who do not study a language. In addition, all students who study a Foreign Language are more prepared for a variety of workplace situations. World Languages are indeed strong allies to overall school and life success. (For more information on the cognitive, academic, attitudinal, and workplace benefits of language

learning, see Marcos, N.D., Modern Language Association, 2003; Robinson, 1998; and Taylor, 2004.)

## Description

What happens on a daily basis in Foreign Language classrooms that explains these consistent findings? In this article, the authors describe how World Language programs contribute to the success of all students and thus merit the same core status as state-assessed disciplines. Illustrative benchmarks (progress markers at the end of grades 4, 8, and 12) and grade-level indicators from Ohio's standards unpack each goal of the national Foreign Language standards (Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons,



**National Standards Graphic**

and Communities) and highlight cross-disciplinary ties. Given the unanimous consensus around the national standards, all readers may rest assured that their standards-based programs will yield similar results.

Let's examine those World Language classrooms and delineate how they link to other core disciplines. We'll begin with the Communication standards, which incorporate three modes of communication: interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational.

### **Communication: Communicate in Languages Other Than English.**

- Standard 1.1: Students engage in conversations, provide and obtain information, express feelings and emotions, and exchange opinions.
- Standard 1.2: Students understand and interpret written and spoken language on a variety of topics.
- Standard 1.3: Students present information, concepts, and ideas to an audience of listeners or readers on a variety of topics.

Interpersonal communication is characterized by conversation, real-time messaging, and video conferencing. It entails everyday communication

with peers, friends, family, and colleagues. All of the traditional skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing occur in this mode of communication. For example, students simulating telephone conversations both listen and speak. Those using e-mail both read and write. One of the key features of this aspect of communication is participants' ability to negotiate meaning. Through asking for/providing clarification, using paraphrases, and repeating, students solve communication problems and break down barriers to misunderstandings, skills commonly cited in many career and life skills goals. Two benchmarks from the Ohio standards follow:

- Give and follow a short sequence of instructions. (K-4)
- Express a wide range of feelings and emotions, and discuss and support opinions. (9-12)

In interpretive communication, students are active participants in the meaning-making processes of listening, viewing, or reading. Information and media literacies may play a prominent role in this mode as students evaluate and select electronic information sources or determine cultural influences in broadcasts and print media. Furthermore, comprehending graphics (e.g., flow charts, tables) reinforces state-assessed skills. This aspect of communication is characterized by one-way communication where no negotiation of meaning is possible, for the creator of the text is absent. Consequently, Foreign Language teachers, just like English Language Arts teachers, must guide students' comprehension through the use of listening and reading strategies. Identifying the main idea and supporting details, searching for key vocabulary terms related to the theme, and guessing the meaning of unknown words from context are examples of such strategies. Sample Ohio benchmarks include:

- Identify a speaker's or author's purpose, and discuss the main idea, characters and supporting details in a variety of media. (5-8)
- Use a variety of reading and listening strategies to derive meaning from text. (9-12)

Presentational communication is characterized by one-way, formal communication. No immediate negotiation of meaning is possible, although there may be a time for questions and answers following the presentation. Examples of presentational communication include posters, skits, speeches, videos, written reports, and multimedia presentations. While predominant in English Language Arts and Social Studies, presentational communication goals exist in all content areas.

To support state-assessed and workplace skills, the incorporation of the writing process into Foreign Language academic content standards strengthens students' ability to organize thoughts and support opinions. The many writing/presenting applications inherent in bringing the standards to

life reinforce the need to write/present for different purposes and audiences. Students also reinforce media literacy skills, another coveted skill set in today's workforce.

For example, in meeting the second benchmark below, students need to access, choose, evaluate, and incorporate a variety of multimedia texts in preparing their presentations.

- Apply age-appropriate writing process strategies to write short, guided paragraphs on various topics (K-4).
- Present original work and cultural material (5-8).

The second standards focus on cultures.

### **Cultures: Gain Knowledge and Understanding of Other Cultures.**

- Standard 2.1: Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the culture studied.
- Standard 2.2: Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the products and perspectives of the culture studied.

The Cultures standards encompass the products, practices, and perspectives associated with the language and culture(s) studied. Products may be tangible (e.g., monuments, beverages) or intangible (e.g., laws, music). Practices refer to behaviors associated with the culture, such as buying fresh food daily. Perspectives are the beliefs, values, and attitudes of a given culture. All three aspects of the standards come into play in instruction. Young students of French, for example, would need to smell, touch, and taste bread baked fresh daily, along with learning the word, to build an appropriate concept of bread. They would learn that in French, "*Bon comme le pain*" (as good as bread), as opposed to "good as gold," describes a worthy person or thing.

Secondary students of Japanese need to know that it is customary to accommodate the opinions of others and to avoid disagreement. Consequently, hearing an affirmative response from a Japanese business person during negotiation with an American counterpart does not necessarily mean that a business deal is sealed. Rather, the perceived agreement might simply indicate that a culturally-based form of courtesy is taking place.

The third standards reinforce concepts from across disciplines, keeping the perspectives of the target culture(s) in mind.

### **Connections: Connect with Other Disciplines and Acquire Information.**

- Standard 3.1: Students reinforce and further their knowledge of other disciplines through the foreign language.
- Standard 3.2: Students acquire information and recognize the distinctive viewpoints that are only available through the foreign language and its cultures.

In addition to cultural content, concepts from across academic disciplines give students and teachers something meaningful and age-appropriate to talk about in the Foreign Language classroom. The result is an integrated curriculum that incorporates topics and skills from other disciplines using the language as the medium of instruction. This practice engenders more relevant learning for real-world applications and reinforces commonly assessed concepts. By recycling and applying these concepts to different situations, World Language students have more occasions to reinforce state-assessed knowledge and skills.

The Connections standards include looking at concepts from the perspective of the target culture, particularly through the use of authentic sources. Authentic sources in the target language allow students to truly understand different viewpoints of the cultures studied without the imposition of cultural filters that result from translation into English. For example, cloning has been a hot topic on the science pages of French newspapers. By examining this information, students can begin to understand the issue from the perspective of another culture, enriching their learning experiences in both French and Science class. Looking at concepts through multiple perspectives increases the likelihood of using higher-order thinking skills, critical thinking, and multiple ways of knowing while promoting true integration of global perspectives into the curriculum.

Many parallels exist between Social Studies and World Languages as students explore the products, practices, and perspectives of a variety of world cultures. In addition, linking to Fine Arts is a natural process, as Foreign Language students come into contact with many of the expressive products (e.g., music, dance, visual art, drama) of the culture(s). Similarly, there are many ties to English Language Arts, especially where literature is concerned. Students must identify plot, character, and setting as well as describe the author's use of such techniques as personification and metaphor. Scientific, historic, economic, linguistic, and technological contributions of the target cultures and their views about such contributions provide ties to all state-assessed disciplines as well as to Technology and Fine Arts.

Below are three grade-level indicators from Ohio's standards that build to the 12<sup>th</sup> grade benchmarks, "Investigate, analyze, and present concepts from across disciplines" and "Investigate, analyze, and present information and viewpoints from the target culture using authentic sources, and apply understandings across disciplines."

- Kindergarten: Sort objects according to attributes (e.g., color, shape, length, size). (Connects to Mathematics, Science.)
- Grade 6: Identify locations using map skills. (Connects to Social Studies.)
- Grade 12: Discuss, propose, and justify solutions to interdisciplinary issues such as political or health issues, environmental concerns, or historical concepts. (Connects to English Language Arts, Science, and Social Studies.)

The fourth standards center on linguistic and cultural comparisons.

**Comparisons: Develop Insight into the Nature of Language and Culture.**

- Standard 4.1: Students demonstrate understanding of the nature of language through comparisons of the language studied and their own.
- Standard 4.2: Students demonstrate understanding of the concept of culture through comparisons of the cultures studied and their own.

Linguistic comparisons enable students to compare the language systems (e.g., sounds, punctuation, syntax) of the second language with those of English (and any home language), resulting in the systematic examination of the nature of language. Comparisons also help students realize that language use varies depending on the situation. In fact, Goethe, the German philosopher, once said, “One who does not know another language does not truly know his/her own.” This is probably the aspect of the standards that readers outside the field will remember most from their own experiences in a Foreign Language classroom, but as described in this article, it is no longer the sole focus!

By way of example, elementary learners might compare *Who* and *¿Quién?* While they both mean “who,” we can compare how each is punctuated, what sound is common for question words in each language ([h] or [w] in English, [k] in Spanish), and what other diacriticals are used with question words in each language (none in English, accent mark in Spanish). Secondary students might be asked to tell what kinds of words change if a story in present time must be changed to past or future time (e.g., adverbs, tense markers on verbs). Students would discuss how to stay consistent in telling the story in the new tense/aspect and compare how English texts do so in relation to texts in the language of study.

Cultural comparisons allow students to analyze critically products, practices, and perspectives of the target culture and their own culture(s). Whereas the Cultures standards deal with the target culture on its own merit, the Comparisons standard seek to develop students’ understanding of relationships across cultures, resulting in deeper insights into the concept of culture. The hope is that such examination will lead to the avoidance of stereotyping and reduction of bias, both frequently listed as valued employability skills. For example, many foreign nationals work in the U.S. in skilled areas, such as technology, engineering, science, and education. Given how few Americans are truly able to use the language of their diverse clients or peers, such cultural knowledge is increasingly crucial to success in the workplace.

For example, elementary students might be asked to look at the two pictures above. Both indicate how the number one is represented when counting with your fingers. How do we do it in American culture? (We use index finger.) How is it done in many other cultures? (One=thumb.) Why might this practice be different between cultures? Engaging in this type of examination builds to more sophisticated understandings of culture.

Older students of Arabic might be asked to discuss the importance of coffee in Saudi Arabia and in the United States. In doing so, they would learn that refusing a friendly offer to join someone for a cup of coffee in both social and professional situations would be considered an affront in Saudi culture.

The Comparisons standards reinforce many of the concepts related to Social Studies, the Fine Arts, and English Language Arts. In addition, assessment items across all content areas frequently ask students to make comparisons.



Former Secretary of Education Paige summarizes the benefits of linguistic and cultural comparisons thusly:

Research shows that learning a second (or a third and a fourth) language develops a person's analytical abilities more effectively than learning a single language. We also know that learning a second language increases one's understanding of one's native language. To the extent that foreign language learning improves a student's cognitive and academic performance, it goes hand in glove with the *No Child Left Behind* goal of ensuring high student outcomes for all children (Paige, 2003, p. 140).

The final standards extend learning beyond the classroom.

### **Communities: Participate in Multilingual Communities at Home and Around the World.**

- Standard 5.1: Students use the language both within and beyond the school setting.
- Standard 5.2: Students show evidence of becoming life-long learners by using the language for personal enjoyment and enrichment.

The Communities standards take the curriculum outside the four walls of the classroom. These standards promote best practice through individualization of the curriculum. Students can pursue their own interests while they increase awareness of local and world communities. Students use

language for real-world applications, combining their knowledge of linguistic structures and cultures to express themselves on an increasingly wide range of topics. Ties to global and international education complement the entire curriculum.

Beyond Career, Technical, and Adult Education connections, links to all content areas are possible here, depending on the students' interests. Regarding the issue of cloning, a student passionate about genetic engineering could access information from target language sources, "chat" online with others about his/her interests, and share information and opinions in both the Foreign Language and Science classrooms. Such an activity enriches communication skills by incorporating the need to consider cross-cultural perspectives as well as reinforcing scientific knowledge. Benchmark examples follow:

- Engage in communication with people locally and around the world. (5-8)
- Report information about and personal reactions to various products, media, and services of the target culture. (9-12)

The national standards and many state standards tie to career exploration and employability skills. The standards illustrate the connection of language study to careers in a vast array of fields and sectors of the economy. It is common for students to encounter speakers of other languages as both employees and consumers within their own communities. Because Foreign Language is for **all** students, many goals focus on career-oriented skills to help students transition into the world of work and to non-traditional education opportunities. They will need linguistic and cultural competence in many languages as they segue into adult workplaces. The "group strategies" in the second benchmark below enable students to develop skills to work cooperatively, value others, and understand different thinking styles and cultural norms. These are coveted skills for any workplace.

- Identify and present information about various careers that require understanding of another language and culture. (5-8)
- Develop evaluative tools and implement group strategies to complete tasks and solve problems. (9-12)

## Summary

Although the standards have been described here in linear fashion, knowledge and skills are integrated both within and across the five Foreign Language standards in classroom practice. In addition, ties to other disciplines show explicit alignment to expectations in state-assessed areas of the curriculum and to the *NCLB* technology guarantee.

Beginning in summer, 2005, and continuing through fall, 2006, model lessons and units written by Ohio Foreign Language educators based on the state-adopted academic content standards will be posted to the Web-based Instructional Management System (IMS) of the Ohio Department of

Education ([www.ode.state.oh.us](http://www.ode.state.oh.us) and follow the links to the IMS). Many of these lessons will be interdisciplinary in nature and all will follow the best practice of backward design. Standards and assessments drive instructional procedures and choice of materials and resources. Novice lessons and units in all three grade bands, intermediate exemplars at middle and high school, and pre-advanced high school lessons and units will be added to the IMS as they are approved by the State Board of Education of Ohio.

## Conclusion

Students who study a Foreign Language get “two-for-one.” They have increased opportunities to reinforce knowledge and skills needed for success on accountability measures. In addition, they acquire linguistic and cultural competence to function in a language beyond English, a highly desirable skill in today’s global world. Connectedness to other disciplines, mandated state assessments, and high-demand workplace skills allow educators and administrators to explicitly demonstrate the added value of World Language study for **all** students in this age of accountability. Core? You bet!

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# The Challenge of Language Learning in Wyoming

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**Brandee Mau**

Sage Valley (WY) Junior High School

Wyoming is my home. It always has been, even during the few years I lived outside its borders. We are the least populated state in the union. We are white and live in relative isolation from big city life and politics. To truly understand how vast Wyoming is, one would have to live here. About half a million people call Wyoming home, which amounts to less than half a person per square mile.

I live in Gillette, a town in the northeastern corner of Wyoming. To non-Wyomingites, Gillette is a small, rural town. To us, it is the fourth largest town in Wyoming, modern, and a “city.” With approximately 20,000 people, it is the largest community in more than a 120 mile radius. Campbell County, of which Gillette is the county seat, is one of the top two coal producing regions in the United States and provides about one fifth of the state budget. The value of coal and methane gas means many good paying jobs that require little education. Many parents and adults in our community see little reason for students to study a language when they see no need for it in Gillette.

I teach in two junior high buildings that house seventh, eighth, and ninth-grade students. There are about 800 to 900 students in each building. We only offer German and Spanish, as the French teacher retired in 1970 and was not replaced. An ancient district philosophy holds that the 14-year-old brain is mature enough to handle a foreign language; therefore languages start in the ninth grade. There are some even older tenets that only certain GPAs should take a language class, and certainly no one should study more than one language at a time. This goes along with the belief that a lot of our students are not going to college but will find work here in the mineral industry.

In addition to teaching, I also facilitate the K-12 foreign language program in our district. My job was created shortly before the enactment of a state law mandating foreign language instruction in all kindergarten, first and second grade programs. Coming into compliance was a big step for my district. Our K-2 teachers show *Salsa*, a pre-literate Spanish video series produced by Georgia Public Broadcasting (1998), with various levels of deeper curricular embedding. It is inaccurate to call my position the K-12 Facilitator, as a large gap between language offerings continues to exist. Nevertheless, every year we make *some* progress in closing the gap. I also organize meetings on curriculum, testing, textbook adoptions, and try to stimulate professional discussions for teachers. Some of the secondary teachers were my own language teachers in

high school, making it difficult for me to assume a leadership role. It was at the end of my first year in this job that I applied to participate in WILL.

### **Filling a Need: the Emergence of WILL**

The Western Initiative for Language Learning (WILL) was the brainchild of Dr. Sally Hood Cisar, Dr. Carl Falsgraf of the Center for Applied Second Language Studies (CASLS) at the University of Oregon, and Ann Tollefson. As foreign language professionals in the Pacific Northwest, they understood the unique challenges faced by new rural foreign language teachers like me. WILL was designed to equip us with skills and resources not accessible in rural areas. More importantly, WILL was designed to give us an opportunity to network, collaborate, and reflect on practices with others experiencing some of the same challenges. In addition to the immediate professional development, they hoped that the second “L” in WILL could also stand for leadership. Concern over the “graying” of national and state foreign language leaders prompted the WILL designers to include participation in the individual teacher’s state foreign language association.

Through the networking of Pacific Northwest Council of Foreign Language (PNCFL), novice teachers were nominated by the six member states’ Foreign Language Associations. Alaska, Washington, Idaho, Montana and Utah each had five spots to fill. Oregon had twenty in total because of additional help from state staff development funds. The parameters of acceptance were that the applicant be more than 100 miles from the nearest four-year university, live in a town of less than 25,000, or be the only language teacher in the school and/or district.

With the help of federal grants, WILL was able to fully fund each attendee for two weeks during the summers in Eugene, Oregon, home of CASLS, over the course of two years. The first week, in the summer of 2003, was focused on standards and thematic unit design. This information served as the basis for action research projects we conducted throughout the following school year. The second week, spent the following summer of 2004, focused on action research projects and developing a leadership project to be conducted the next school year (2004-05).

### **Specific Results of WILL**

WILL, with its full funding and promise of professional collaboration, was just what I needed. I lacked confidence in the presence of my former teachers and did not feel that I spoke with much authority when discussing foreign language issues with administrators. Growing up here, with my dad being on the school board, did not lend much to my credibility. In addition, I had just finished my fourth year of teaching. I did not feel like much of an expert, let alone a leader. As I reflect on the last two years, I can see that WILL

did not so much give me confidence; rather it helped me set aside my fears to see what I already possessed.

For my first project with WILL, I chose to induct two new language teachers in my district. I chose topics on standards, thematic units, and language acquisition with classroom management ideas interspersed. As the year progressed, a first year teacher from a district across the mountains joined our meetings via the Wyoming Education Network (WEN), a compressed video network that can connect all Wyoming schools. Through journals and anecdotal evidence, I discovered that new foreign language teachers need more than just classroom management tips. They also need support in developing the articulation policies and assessment strategies for mixed ability levels. Most importantly, they want support, acceptance, and credibility from other language teachers.

I am now working on my second project, which was a natural growth from my first. This WILL project is focused on developing better communication and professional acceptance among foreign language teachers. In its first phase, the foreign language teachers in my district agreed to meet and discuss the issue of enrollment and attrition. At our first meeting we decided to look for evidence to support or disprove our beliefs about language learning and the classroom through a student survey. I hope to extend the meetings state wide, using the aforementioned WEN to foster professional relationships among our state's language teachers. Wyoming is in essence merely one large district spread over 97,000 square miles!

A comment from one of the first-year teachers describing her experience as an inductee last year also describes my experience with WILL. She said she was drowning in all that she knew and did not know and that our meetings and discussions were like a lifeline thrown to her before she was overwhelmed. I can say it no better than that. WILL gave me the same lifeline.

### **Looking Forward**

Currently, WILL is only available to teachers in the Pacific Northwest. CASLS is now recruiting participants for the second two-year cohort of novice rural teachers. This cohort will not only receive pedagogy and leadership support from national experts and CASLS staff, but they will have the support from members of the first WILL cohort. For more information about the WILL program, you may contact CASLS via their website: [www.casls.uoregon.edu](http://www.casls.uoregon.edu).



# L-LINCC: Choosing Electronic Networking for Collaborative Communities

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**Rebecca L. Chism**  
Kent State University

**T**echnology affords an unprecedented opportunity for providing rapid information and linking learners in a way that transcends time and space. The pedagogy unit in the Department of Modern and Classical Language Studies (MCLS) at Kent State University recognizes the importance of providing on-going support and collaboration for teaching professionals, thus, L-LINCC (Languages and Learning in an Interactive Networked Collaborative Community) is being developed for pre- and in-service foreign language teachers as a means to encourage their preparation, participation, continuance, and growth. This virtual community of teachers provides information and resources as well as computer mediated communication forums for advice and exchange, thus providing a dynamic and interactive link for all interested in excellence in instruction.

The development of L-LINCC was made possible due to a substantial grant from Information Services, the Office of the Provost, and the Faculty Professional Development Center for the development of Partnerships in Transforming Teaching and Learning with Technology grants program at Kent State University. L-LINCC was proposed by the pedagogy unit in MCLS as part of the development of a Virtual Center of Excellence for Second Language Teaching and Learning.

Before initiating L-LINCC, several issues were considered, from which research questions were developed. These include the following:

- How can MCLS continue to be a means of support for its pre-service teachers once they have entered the profession?
- How can MCLS provide a means of support for in-service teachers who are seeking to continue to develop their skills and grow in their area of expertise?
- How can MCLS continue its outreach efforts and provide a means for area teachers to collaborate within a community dedicated to educational excellence?

In response to these questions, the pedagogy unit envisions L-LINCC as an example of leadership and cooperation for the populations we serve, namely the pre- and in-service teachers of Northeast Ohio.

**Pre-Service Teachers**

Our revised undergraduate teacher education curriculum follows the model proposed by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (Spinelli, 1995). Students earn their B.A. degree in the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS), which houses MCLS, with majors in French, German, Latin, Russian, Spanish or American Sign Language and a minor in Education. The College of Education provides three inquiry seminars; all other courses are administered in CAS, including Computers for Second Language Teaching, Psychology of Language, Foreign Languages and Culture, two methods courses, student teaching, and a fourth inquiry seminar, that is held in conjunction with the student teaching experience and provides an in-class support system for novice instructors. Other professional and practical issues are also addressed, including portfolio development, reflective and critical thinking, employment searches and interviews, and action research. Pre-service teachers are inexperienced and need expert guidance and mentoring (Hudson, 2003; Jackson, 2004), which they often receive from their peers, cooperating teacher, university supervisor, and other contacts during the student teaching semester. This support and guidance is essential; pre-service teachers who have had adequate support and training are more likely to remain in the profession and to avoid burn-out (Paese, 2003).

However, once a pre-service teacher has completed the program of study, there is a critical need to provide continuous support for instruction (Menchaca, 2003), easy access to resources (Chubbuck, Allard & Clift, 2001), models for instruction and management (McCaffrey, Koretz & Lockwood, 2004), and most importantly, a sense of community (Carver, 2004). The establishment of friendly support networks (Bruce, 1995), and cohort models of peer support (Mello, 2003) are some of the ways to facilitate growth and confidence in this particular population. As Mello reports:

A majority of students (96 percent) reported feeling that being a member of a cohort was highly beneficial. They observed that the cohort model presented them with opportunities to become familiar with fellow students and professors. The cohort also led to feelings of comfort and support, which in turn helped students learn and explore subject matter (358).

Linking in-service and pre-service teachers in a collaborative community is one of the ways L-LINCC hopes to serve both groups: first, to provide the much needed guidance, support, modeling, and sense of community for pre-service teachers; and second, as a way to involve the expertise of in-service teachers as well as encouraging their active participation in the profession. Therefore, collaboration and communication between pre- and in-service teachers is seen to be mutually beneficial and serves as a means to foster professional collaboration and development in the area.

### **In-service teachers**

The Teacher Education and Licensure Standards proposed by the Center for the Teaching Profession of The Ohio Department of Education (2003) requires in-service teachers to pursue their Master's degree for the second renewal of their professional teaching license; Kent's M.A. programs in French, German, Latin, Spanish and American Sign Language, with a concentration in pedagogy, primarily serve this population by offering classroom-relevant course work that provides opportunities to grow in their area of expertise, including both topical and pedagogical techniques.

Due to its service to both pre- and in-service instructors in the area, MCLS is in a unique position to link these two populations as well as to promote its own outreach efforts. Several studies (Benton & Schillo, 2004; El-Amin, Fordham & Hammond, 2002; Hines, Murphy & Pezone, 2003) acknowledge the importance of linking university and secondary institutions; universities are in a position to provide an environment that encourages interdependence, cooperation, coordination, and collaboration (Allison, Cristol & El-Amin, 1998) in order to foster greater articulation of curriculum and program goals, leadership, outreach, sharing of resources, and professional growth.

While community-building and contacts occur naturally in the classroom setting, often these dissipate once the semester is over. Technology provides an exceptional forum for linking pre- and in-service teachers to the university. By accessing L-LINCC through its web page sponsored by MCLS, participants will find the following: a digital library composed of important cultural materials; a link to pedagogically sound lesson plans and ideas; a message board discussion forum for announcements and questions; access to email and opportunities for chat. By transcending the limitations of time and space, a virtual center of excellence for second language teaching and learning is able to address the needs of all concerned (See Appendix A).

The use of technology to address the needs of pre- and in-service instructors has been well-documented (Lim, Hung & Wong, 2004; Stallings & Koellner-Clark, 2003; Russell et al., 2003; Weisner & Salkeld, 2004). First, by providing immediate access to resources, including instructional materials, cultural artifacts, and lesson plans, pre- and in-service teachers as well as university instructors have increased opportunities for collaboration and articulation. L-LINCC is intended to provide an up-to-date and dynamic resource base designed to keep all members involved and abreast of the latest trends in the teaching profession. Another unique feature of technological innovations is its ability to facilitate virtual conversations through synchronous and asynchronous computer-mediated communication forums, including chat, instant e-mail and discussion boards (Angelini, Bonk & Valanides, 2003; Doering, Dexter & Johnson, 2003; Mitchell, 2003). By providing instant access to expert advice, announcements, peer-support and mentoring (Smith, 2002), the sense of collaboration and community extends beyond the classroom walls and serves as a means to provide continuous support. DeWert, Babinski & Jones

(2003) described how an online support forum for beginning teachers provided them with “increased emotional support, decreased feelings of isolation, increased confidence, more enthusiasm for work, increased reflection, ability to adopt a more critical perspective, and improved problem-solving skills” (311). In addition to providing this crucial support for first-year instructors, it can also revitalize those who have been in the profession for a longer period of time.

Not only will L-LINCC serve as a virtual center for information and collaboration, it will also serve as a model for professional development as far as the implementation and integration of technologies both in and out of the classroom is concerned (Garland, 1999; Marra & Carr-Chellman, 1999; Peck, Augustine & Popp, 2003). Although there are some examples of the integration of technology with the pre-service curriculum (Gunter, 2001; McManus, Charles & Rubio, 2001), Harland (2001) notes how university faculty often do not model proper uses of technology, and follow-up instruction is often necessary once teachers are in the field.

By developing and showcasing L-LINCC, MCLS hopes to provide an important venue for the instructors of Northeast Ohio. By providing dynamic resources, sound advice, expert to novice exchange, and examples of the uses of technology, L-LINCC represents choosing electronic networking for the establishment of collaborative communities dedicated to excellence in education.

### **Author Note**

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## APPENDIX A

### Welcome to L-LINCC



Lesson Plans



Communication Tools



The Five C's



ACTFL Guidelines



Announcements



Digital Library



Ask a Question!



# Finding a Place in the Core: The Ongoing Challenge to World Languages in an Urban School District

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**Gaelle Berg**

Minneapolis Public Schools

World languages teachers in Minneapolis Public Schools enthusiastically face their new students in the fall, infusing their classes with the joy of learning languages and cultures, impressing upon their students that they are learning a necessary skill that will enable them to communicate with others around the world and enable them to be better world citizens. The 2005 Year of Languages initiative gives teachers another incentive with national support to advocate for their programs. They continue their search to find creative, innovative ways to highlight their language programs through engaging instruction, advanced courses, trips abroad, language contests, celebrations, and scholarships. Lurking behind their enthusiasm lies the ongoing anxiety of wondering whether their programs will continue next year or whether there will be cuts to their teaching positions when spring budget discussions take place.

Like many of the nation's school districts, our district is challenged with dwindling resources, tightening budgets, and program cuts. Since 2000, Minneapolis Public Schools student enrollment has dropped by over 5000 students and is projected to lose another 7000 students by 2008. Over the past three years, budget cuts have totaled \$84 million or almost 17% of the annual operating budget. These cuts were passed onto schools, resulting in teacher layoffs in many areas and program cuts across the board, with language programs cut approximately 27% over the past three years. With 2005 the Year of Languages underway, this situation challenges language teachers and school administrators who advocate for strong language programs at all levels to find ways to support strong language programs that parents want for their children given the diminishing resources available to schools.

The first challenge is to seriously promote the opportunity for *all* students to learn another language. As the old adage says, "Where there is a will, there is a way." In Minnesota, instruction in world languages must be offered as an elective in all districts, with districts determining requirements for graduation. While learning a world language is not yet required by the state, the state requirement that each district adopt standards for world languages and review their own policies offers an opportunity for language teachers to publicly examine their district's stance on language learning and to further promote the study of languages. To date, no district in Minnesota requires the study

of a world language for graduation. However, most colleges recommend a minimum of two years of the study of one language for entrance. At the very least, if districts hold the high expectation that all students should be prepared to go to college, then a minimum of two years of study of another language in high school should be expected for all students. Examining this expectation along with other graduation requirements can lead to a rich discussion of which competencies our students will need to be successful in the future and increase support for longer sequences of language learning, beyond the two years required for college.

Whether or not language learning is required, the opportunities available to students to learn other languages are tied to the resources of time and money that schools have at their disposal to meet their school priorities. In Minneapolis, as elsewhere in the nation, schools are focusing their efforts on narrowing the achievement gap, evidenced by comparing standardized test scores between white and minority students, for which schools are held strictly accountable. These efforts often involve providing additional remedial coursework in reading or mathematics for students who need to pass the state tests, which often takes the place of other electives, such as world languages. School sites, under pressure to raise test scores, decide which students get which courses, remedial or enrichment. The end result of promoting remedial courses in place of elective courses for underperforming students too often is an exclusion of many students from world language courses. The Council for Basic Education researched the question of equity of opportunity to learn in a research study entitled *Academic Atrophy: The Condition of the Liberal Arts in America's Public Schools* (Zastrow & Janc, 2004). Regarding declines in foreign language offerings in the nation's schools, the research data showed a widening gap between white and minority students' opportunities to study foreign languages. According to the surveys by Zastrow and Janc (2004), high-minority schools in particular appear more likely than their low-minority counterparts to experience declines in instructional time in foreign languages (p. 17).

In an effort to ensure that they meet accountability measures, schools make site-based decisions regarding the allocation of resources and scheduling of increased time for all of the subjects they are required to provide for students. They must also provide remedial courses, which can mean fewer resources left for offering electives or specialist areas. Subjects that were once considered electives, such as the visual arts and music, are now required for graduation in Minnesota, which in turn demand more resources from the schools. Keeping strong world language programs in this environment necessitates diligent participation in decision-making and tireless advocacy in each school on the part of all world language teachers.

Maintaining good language programs can be done, especially with the support of parents who desire an equitable and excellent education for all

***Keeping strong world language programs in this environment necessitates diligent participation in decision-making and tireless advocacy in each school on the part of all world language teachers.***

students. In Minneapolis, all schools must *offer* at least one world language in middle school programs. Each school site determines the kind of program, which language is offered, and which students will have the opportunity to learn a language. For some schools, this may be an exploratory program for all students in selected grades; for others, it may be a sequential program. In some schools, all students have an opportunity to choose to learn a language; in others, students who are not on track to pass the state tests are required to take remedial courses. This can result in unequal opportunities for students to learn languages, a situation that school management teams must examine if they believe that all students should have equal opportunities to learn. Schools that demonstrate better test scores have fewer students in remedial courses, thus giving them more resources to offer more electives and more substantial language programs, resulting in more equitable representation of diverse students who are learning languages. The challenge for language teachers in these schools is to gather data on their students' achievement in school, on tests or other indicators, in order to show how language learning contributes to better achievement and enhances the overall education of students in the school. As schools are held more accountable not only with regards to student achievement, but also for attracting students to their programs, these value-added approaches will strengthen the perception of and appreciation for maintaining strong world language programs in the middle schools.

The issue of resources in terms of time and money extends into the high school programs, where traditionally the strongest world languages programs have existed. In addition to the stresses of fewer resources and recurring budget cuts, increased state graduation requirements and the creation of small learning communities (SLCs) have amplified competition for time during the school day. In addition, this past year the state legislature in Minnesota, and subsequently the Minneapolis Public School District, increased graduation requirements for all students to include four years of English language arts, three and a half years of social studies, three years of mathematics, three years of sciences, one year of art, and one year of physical education and health. By 2007, students will have only three year-long slots for electives in their schedules. The creation of small learning communities (SLCs) for high schools generally organized around a vocation theme, such as engineering, has brought about additional "required electives" for students in the SLCs. In 2007, the typical high school student's schedule will allow no more than three year-long elective courses, effectively reducing the amount of time a student can elect to learn a language in high school. This could jeopardize the long sequences of study in high school

of up to four years, including programs such as College in the Schools and Advanced Placement courses in languages.

The design of small learning communities can also impact the breadth of languages offered. In Minneapolis, the array of choices of languages offered for study can span anywhere from one language offered (Spanish) to six (Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Japanese, and Latin), depending on the high school. SLCs can affect these offerings because of scheduling and staffing limitations. The challenge is to maintain smaller programs of less commonly taught languages through the interim of reform.

High school language teachers in Minneapolis have had to examine how they can fit into the tightening high school schedule and come up with incentives and alternatives in order to encourage students to take long sequences of language. The small learning communities that have a global or international focus, such as the International Baccalaureate, International Studies, and International Business programs, are faring better in this climate of reform. These programs *require* students to take four years of language study. A few teachers have found promising approaches by integrating language learning into the content of the small learning community focus. For example, Business Japanese taught through a content-based approach replaces the traditional level three Japanese in the International Business SLC of one city high school. At another high school, Spanish Visual Arts was a popular elective, taught as an immersion arts class. Some high school language teachers are trying other approaches, such as offering College in the Schools courses for university credits, or study abroad opportunities to encourage language students to persist in the program. Still others are relying on student enthusiasm for learning through innovative teaching methods, such as TPR Storytelling. The high school reform initiative to create smaller high schools brings change and challenge as teachers need to compete more adeptly for students' time and interest and therefore revitalize their programs.

At the elementary level, while few schools in Minneapolis offer the opportunity to learn another language, parents are generally interested in this prospect and are seeking opportunities to enroll in these schools. In response to parent interest and in an effort to draw families back to the district schools, there are renewed efforts to offer more elementary world language programs. Five new elementary programs are starting this year: one Spanish dual immersion program, two FLES programs (French and Chinese) in Primary Years International Baccalaureate magnets, and two FLEX programs (French and Spanish). These add to the five current elementary programs that include a successful Spanish dual immersion and four FLES programs. However, this means that only 17% of the elementary schools in Minneapolis offer a world language program for their students as part of their core program. A few schools have begun to offer before or after school programs for parents who are willing to pay for the opportunity for their child to begin to learn a language in elementary school. While there is not yet a district policy requiring language study for all students, district administration is aware of the problem of inequity

of opportunity for students to learn languages. It is clear that many families appreciate the value added by world language programs in the academic program of schools. Parents with children in strong language programs undoubtedly back the programs and lobby school site teams to support them. The schools that do offer a world language do so because of strong parent interest and advocacy. Language teachers and advocates must capitalize on this interest. Such support provides a counter-response to the elementary school administrators and classroom teachers who report that trying to fit one more thing into the instructional day is very difficult because of the time required for teaching all of the required content areas, the current emphasis on literacy and math, and the lack of funding for specialists beyond what schools are required to offer in music, visual arts, physical education, and health.

District administrators show an interest in supporting existing and new elementary language programs. As more models are established for elementary language programs, in addition to immersion, schools demonstrate how they can fit world language instruction into the school day and fund the positions. These new examples will help to extend the opportunity to include language learning into the balanced “core” curriculum for many more students. In the new FLES programs that are starting up in Minneapolis, teachers are working to establish themselves as a part of the integrated core of learning that benefits all students. The teachers in these programs are seeking various ways to augment the elementary curriculum through thematic, interdisciplinary, content-based language learning that builds connections to other subjects.

***We are challenged to show that language learning is more than learning grammar and tourist vocabulary, but is a viable, engaging way to prepare our students to appreciate diverse perspectives of cultures of the world and to enrich their own communication with and understanding of other multilingual people on our planet.***

Language teachers in our large urban district are indeed challenged these days and are seeking ways to meet these challenges proactively. They are looking for ways to gather and analyze data from test scores to show that learning languages supports achievement in literacy and mathematics. They also want to show that their language programs are effective in producing proficient speakers of the language and to make the case for long sequences of language learning. They are challenged to advocate for learning various languages, in addition to Spanish and French, such as Ojibwe, German, Arabic, Latin, Japanese and Chinese. They are challenged to show that language learning is more than learning grammar and tourist vocabulary but is a viable, engaging way to prepare our students to appreciate diverse perspectives of cultures of

the world and to enrich their own communication with and understanding of other multilingual people on our planet. Finally, they are challenged to find answers to how schools can provide equitable opportunities for all students to learn this important skill. For this they need to find a place at the budget and scheduling table and make a clear case that this is what students need, parents want, and the nation requires.

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## **Section 3**

### **Changes in Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction**

#### **Optimizing Student Success: Focused Curriculum, Meaningful Assessment, and Effective Instruction**

Aleidine Moeller



#### **Extending the Foreign Language Classroom with Technology: Creating Computerized Oral Activities and Tests**

Janet Flewelling & Donald Snider

#### **Assessing Distance Applications to Foreign Language Learning**

Carolyn Gascoigne

#### **Challenges and Triumphs of Communicative Distance Instruction**

Lisa Fournier

#### **Computers in the Modern Language Classroom: Voice Recordings and PowerPoint as Tools for Student Empowerment**

Jeanette Hecker

#### **Teaching Culture: A Bringing Together of Cultures, Cultural Elements, and Resources**

Melissa Kentner

#### **Grammar Feedback: Techniques to Promote Metacognitive Reflections in Student Writing**

Deborah Page, Ruth Benander, &  
Teresa Roig-Torres

#### **Documenting and Improving Student Learning Through the LinguaFolio**

Aleidine Moeller, Vickie Scow, &  
Jacque Bott Van Houten

#### **Learning to Participate, Communicate, and Cooperate in the Language Classroom**

Tatiana Sildus

#### **Reaching Beyond the Classroom: Ideas for Using Weblogs in Language Education**

Cendel Karaman & Kristin Hoyt



# Optimizing Student Success: Focused Curriculum, Meaningful Assessment, and Effective Instruction

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**Aleidine J. Moeller**

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

One of the greatest challenges facing foreign language teachers is the pressure to ‘cover the curriculum.’ Jeff Golub (1993) noted “when one must cover items—and usually there are far too many items in the curriculum anyway to be covered adequately—one tends to focus on teaching content instead of teaching students” (p. 3).

Classroom teaching has often focused too narrowly on the memorization of information in a setting that resembles what Freire dubs the “banking model,” depositing knowledge without regard for the individual background knowledge and experiences. Language standards have broadened our sense of what we teach and why. These standards promote three purposes for learning a language: to communicate interpersonally, to interpret, or to present information and ideas. Individual state standards delineate performance outcomes, what students should be able to do (e.g. write a personal communication such as, a note, letter, or invitation) at various levels of language learning. These standards guide our choices of what to teach, but the curriculum must still be adapted to meet the age, needs, and interests of the students in our classrooms.

*Standards guide our choices of what to teach, but the curriculum must still be adapted to meet the age, needs, and interests of the students in our classrooms.*

As a result of standards, the concepts of curriculum and assessment have changed. Traditionally scope and sequence were provided and “standardized” tests were administered at the end of a unit of instruction. A list of grammar and vocabulary were assigned, taught, and “covered.” With the advent of standards, students were asked to use these structures and vocabulary in authentic contexts and situations. The question for the teacher was no longer, what do I need to cover, but rather, how can my students demonstrate successful use and knowledge of the target language and culture? What assessment will demonstrate that students have reached the standard? The lines between curriculum, assessment, and instruction have become blurred

and almost indistinguishable.

### **Curriculum and the Teacher**

The curriculum serves as a means to an end; it is a detailed plan with identified lessons in an appropriate form and sequence that directs teaching. It specifies the activities, assignments, and assessments to be used in achieving its goals: what the learner will know and do. A teacher focuses on a topic (e.g. table etiquette), uses a specific resource (e.g. video, simulation), and chooses specific instructional methods (cooperative groups to analyze similarities and differences in table etiquette) to cause learning to meet a given standard (e.g. the student demonstrates understanding of the concept of culture through comparisons of cultures studied and their own, Standard 4.2). Standards are not prescriptions for particular curricular or instructional approaches, but rather are meant to support teachers instead of dictating to teachers what and how they should teach. Teachers are placed in the role of decision-making professionals. The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction has produced *Planning Curriculum for Learning World Languages* (2002) designed to help educators develop curriculum for learning languages. This resource provides step-by-step decisions necessary for designing a curriculum for learning languages.

An interactive curriculum depends on a teacher's knowing how students are reacting to instruction, what they wish to learn more about, what research the teacher needs to conduct, and what tools are needed to optimize learning. A blending of student interests and needs with the required curriculum necessitates continual assessment that informs instruction.

*An interactive curriculum depends on a teacher's knowing how students are reacting to instruction, what they wish to learn more about, what research the teacher needs to conduct, and what tools are needed to optimize learning.*

Traditionally, what we teach is prescribed by the state, the school district, or the publishing company. The textbook and often the exams are fixed, leaving little consideration for background knowledge and interests of students. However, as Elliot Eisner (1992) notes:

If teaching is weak or insensitive, whatever virtues the curriculum might possess will be for naught. The teacher is the prime mediator of life in the classroom and the quality of teaching ought to be a primary concern of school improvement . . . Our evaluation practices operationally define what really matters for students and teachers. If our evaluation practices do not reflect our most cherished values,

they will undermine the values we cherish (p. 5)

The important role of the teacher as “mediator of life in the classroom” (Eisner, 1992, p. 5) was supported in Sanders’ research that investigated student achievement data in the state of Tennessee and tied teacher quality to student achievement (Sanders & Horn, 1994; Wright, Horn & Sanders, 1997). As a result of analyzing the achievement scores of more than 100,000 students, they concluded “that the most important factor affecting student learning is the teacher” (1997, p. 63). By grouping teachers into quintiles based on their effectiveness in producing student learning gains, Sanders and Rivers (1998) examined the impact of teacher effectiveness on the learning of students ranging from low to high-achievers. On average, the least effective teachers produced gains of about 14 percentile points among low achieving students during the school year as opposed to the most effective teachers, who posed gains that averaged 53 percentile points.

A growing body of research is investigating what constitutes teacher effectiveness. Scholars have identified three qualities that impact student achievement: strong verbal and math skills, deep content knowledge, and teaching skills (Ferguson, 1997; Goldhaber & Brewer, 1996; Darling-Hammond, 1996). Goldhaber and Brewer (1996) found a significant positive relationship between teachers’ degrees and students’ achievement in technical subjects. They concluded that “in mathematics and science, it is the teacher subject-specific knowledge that is the important factor in determining tenth-grade achievement” (p. 199). Much like science and mathematics, foreign language is a technical skill requiring a deep understanding of the target culture and the ability to perform at a high level of communication in a variety of complex social and professional settings. Content expertise can be gained through extensive study and immersion in the target cultures. A second important quality, teaching skills, is acquired through teacher education, professional development, and experience in the classroom.

The “Ready to Teach Act of 2003, Teacher Quality Enhancement Grants, section 201” (H.R. 2211) defines “teaching skills” as those that:

- (A) are based on scientifically based research;
- (B) enable teachers to effectively convey and explain subject matter content;
- (C) lead to increased student achievement; and
- (D) use strategies that
  - (i) are specific to subject matter;
  - (ii) include ongoing assessment of student learning;
  - (iii) focus on identification and tailoring of academic instruction to student’s [sic] specific learning needs; and
  - (iv) focus on classroom management.

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards publication, *World*

*Languages Other Than English Standards* (2001), elaborates on these skills and offers prospective candidates an opportunity to reflect upon how they meet these foreign language standards and ways to address possible deficiencies.

### **Assessment and Evaluation**

Assessment refers to a collection of data, information that enlightens the teacher and the learner, information that drives instruction. Good teachers assess constantly, they observe what is happening in their classroom, what Yetta Goodman (1978) dubs “kid watching.” They talk to students and pose questions about their learning. Good teachers assess and adjust their teaching based on their assessment and share assessments with their students, so students can adjust their performances to meet criteria and expectations. Ongoing assessment does much more than inform evaluation; one of assessment’s functions is to drive instruction.

***Good teachers assess and adjust their teaching based on their assessment and share assessments with their students, so students can adjust their performances to meet criteria and expectations.***

Assessment is an indicator of the extent to which the curricular goals are being met and have been achieved. It is a general term used to underscore the use of numerous methods to gather evidence to indicate that students are meeting standards. Forms of evidence include a variety of formal and informal assessments during a unit of study or a course, such as observations, simulations/skits, traditional quizzes and tests, and performance tasks and projects, as well as students’ self-assessments gathered over time. Using different types of assessments provides a richer and more comprehensive picture of student learning that allows students to have more than one way to demonstrate their knowledge and skills. Performance standards, or intended outcomes, refers to the desired impact of teaching and learning—what a student should know and be able to do and what standard should be used to signify understanding. Curriculum and instruction are the venue for achieving specific results. Content standards specify the input—what is the content that should be covered? Performance standards specify the desired output—what must the student do, and how well, to be judged successful?

The *ACTFL Performance Guidelines for K-12 Learners* (1998) provide a barometer for how well students should be performing at the novice, intermediate, and pre-advanced stages. These guidelines are grounded in the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century* (National Standards, 1999) that define the K-12 foreign language curriculum according to modes of communication: interpersonal (face-to-face communication,

personal letters and e-mail), interpretive (one-way reading or listening), and presentational (one-way writing and speaking). Language descriptors are provided for comprehensibility, comprehension, language control, vocabulary, cultural awareness, and communication strategies in chart form according to levels of language (novice, intermediate, pre-advanced). Using these charts teachers can identify the descriptors their students can satisfactorily complete.

Wiggins (1993) defines learning and its measurement by pointing out that “understanding is not cued knowledge: performance is never the sum of drills; problems are not exercises; mastery is not achieved by the unthinking application of algorithms. In other words, we cannot be said to understand something unless we can employ our knowledge wisely, fluently, flexibly, and aptly in particular and diverse contexts” (p. 200). In their pivotal work, *Understanding by Design* (1998), Wiggins and McTighe use the term “understanding” to mean sophisticated insights and abilities, reflected in varied performances and contexts. Their text aims to guide teachers in designing lessons and assessments that anticipate, evoke and overcome the most likely student misconceptions and that engage learners in meaningful and authentic learning tasks that put the learner in a more active role as a constructor of meaning. Their perspective interfaces closely with Eisner (1992), who defines the deeper mission of schooling as “the stimulation of curiosity, the cultivation of the intellect, the refinement of sensibilities, the growth of imagination, and the desire to use these unique and special human potentialities” (p. 3).

Alternative assessment, a term popularized by Grant Wiggins (1989), is a broad term referring to any type of assessment that deviates from the traditional, behavioral, stimulus-response model characterized by one-answer, multiple-choice tests found on teacher-created tests and standardized tests. Authentic assessment refers to tasks that are real and meaningful to the learner in today’s world. Performance assessment, which may be authentic as well as alternative, refers to any type of assessment that provides opportunities for students to demonstrate what they know, putting what they have learned into a meaningful context and showing what they know. Portfolios are a natural way for students and teachers to track the learning experience over a period of time. Any collection of work that showcases the student as learner, from writing folders to required demonstrations of language proficiency. Portfolios are developmental, allowing students to make constant updates to document their progress (Tierney, Carter, & Desai 1991) and represent active processes (selecting, comparing, self-evaluation, sharing, goal-setting) more than products.

The teacher’s role in selecting work for the student portfolio is critical in helping students to set learning goals. The teacher helps students articulate reasons for including each piece in their portfolios and encourages them to be explicit as to why they feel certain pieces should be included and how they reached their decision. One of the chapters in this section of the *Report* describes a longitudinal study of the use of the portfolio in the language classroom.

Evaluation is the product of assessment, a step toward understanding and drawing conclusions. After gathering data (information and evidence), teachers collect all the learning data and evaluate the products of their efforts and the progress of their students. Strickland and Strickland (1998) note “to find answers, teachers need to know how to gather the data and how to analyze the information, much the way anthropological and sociological researchers do. Such gathering and analysis requires a knowledge of qualitative assessment techniques, such as keeping anecdotal records, conducting interviews, compiling checklists, and carrying on dialogue discussions” (p. 30). Evaluation thus becomes an extension of learning by offering concrete and understandable feedback rather than simply a number or letter that offers little in the way of improving achievement.

*If students are to assume a level of responsibility for their own learning, they must have information they understand, that is accurate, immediate and delivered in a way that encourages further learning.*

The primary user of assessment information is the student. If students are to assume a level of responsibility for their own learning, they must have information they understand, that is accurate, immediate and delivered in a way that encourages further learning. After assessing and evaluating, teachers have the responsibility of sharing their evaluations with the interested parties such as parents, administrators, other teachers and, of course, the general public.

## **Conclusion**

With clearly identified results and appropriate evidence of understanding, teachers can plan instructional activities. Wiggins and McTighe (1998) describe the most effective curricular designs as “backward,” a design created by Ralph Tyler (1949) fifty years ago: identify the desired results (goals or standards), determine the acceptable evidence (performances) called for by the standards, and plan the learning experiences and instruction (the teaching) needed to equip students to perform (pp. 8-9). Assessment thereby drives the instruction. Through ongoing assessment the teacher adjusts the instruction as needed and continually assesses learning progress and growth. Assessment becomes an extension of the learning, providing continual feedback to improve achievement. Learning becomes a process, not merely a product, instilling in students how to learn while learning. By helping students to evaluate and regulate their own learning, students become active participants in the learning process and see first-hand the connection between effort and results.

Classroom practice aligns with research findings when teachers integrate practices that put student needs first and call for strong student involvement in

every facet of classroom instruction and assessment (Chappuis & Chappuis, 2002). The articles in this section of the *Report* provide a variety of instructional strategies for enhancing learning and suggestions for differentiating instruction given students' diverse learning styles and characteristics. These scientifically documented instructional strategies (e.g. computer assisted language learning; feedback techniques; cooperative learning; self-regulation) will assist the language teacher in integrating research-based curriculum and instruction into the classroom to optimize student achievement.

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# Extending the Foreign Language Classroom with Technology: Creating Computerized Oral Activities and Tests

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**Janet Flewelling**  
**Donald Snider**

University of Windsor (ON)

**T**he development of oral language skills is a high priority for foreign language teachers and students alike. But it is not always easy for instructors to adequately address the development of oral proficiency as much as they would like, nor is it easy for students to develop a high level of oral proficiency based on class time alone. This article will discuss how teachers can extend the classroom with computerized oral activities they create to reinforce what has been taught in class, and how they can also create computerized oral tests that can be administered and marked over the Internet. The article will also discuss how teacher-created computerized oral language exercises and tests can be used in online courses to help students develop oral language proficiency.

There are a number of ways in which foreign language instructors typically assess their students' oral language skills: oral interviews between a student and teacher, classroom observation, oral recordings done with a cassette recorder or in a language lab, to name the most commonly used strategies. Oral interviews are time-consuming, frequently difficult to schedule, and are fatiguing. Managing large numbers of student cassettes is cumbersome, and there is always the risk of not being able to listen to a student's submission if the cassette tape breaks or snarls. Additionally, not all schools have access to a language lab. The author of this article had, for many years, assessed her students' oral language skills in her university's language lab. When the university closed its language lab and replaced it with a multimedia lab, rather than returning to the practice of one-on-one oral interviews with her students, she decided to investigate the possibility of oral language assessment via computer.

In 1999, the authors conceived and began to develop a software application now called XpressLab that allows for the reinforcement and assessment of oral language skills via computer. This software has undergone numerous revisions based on their experience with the software and on feedback from teachers who have used it in pilot situations in both face-to-face and online courses. Use of XpressLab in pilot situations continues to be the basis for their research into the integration of technology into foreign language programs.

## **Oral Language Reinforcement and Assessment**

### *Traditional Courses*

In face-to-face classes, teachers are readily able to plan and implement lessons designed to reinforce all four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Depending on the length of the course, instructors may or may not have adequate time in class to give students enough opportunities to develop the desired level of competence in these skills. It is relatively easy to provide students with activities that will help them to work on their listening, reading and writing skills independently: it is more of a challenge to do this with the speaking skill.

The evaluation of listening, reading, and writing is a fairly straightforward process. It can readily be accomplished by pen and paper tests using true/false, multiple choice, or essay-type questions (Baker, 2001). The assessment of speaking skills, however, is much more challenging, especially given the fact that it should be done on a regular basis (Gonzales, 1989). In some cases, it is actually neglected because of the amount of time that oral testing requires (Egan, 1999).

It would be pedagogically unsound to attempt to measure speaking proficiency with a pen and paper test (Flewelling, 1996). Therefore, other approaches are required. Traditionally, teachers have relied on classroom observation, oral interviews, and, in some cases, language lab testing to obtain oral proficiency marks for their students. Technology now offers us a new option: computer-based oral language testing.

### *Online Courses*

Online course delivery lends itself particularly well to courses that are predominantly text-based. It has, however, been difficult for language teachers to embrace online instruction. Most language teachers recognize the importance of including activities in their course that reinforce all four skills. The Distance Education Report (2003) indicates that to be exemplary, an online course must encourage learning by doing. They suggest that the “subject content [should be] mastered and or evaluated by doing rather than, or more than, reading (or listening)” (p. 5). In a language course, in particular, it is important that students be provided with a way to improve their production skills (speaking and writing) as well as their receptive skills (listening and reading).

Simonson, Smaldino, Albright, & Zvacek (2003) state that distance education must “permit equivalent learning experiences for distant and local students” (pp. 22-23). So, for the learning experiences to be equivalent, teachers would have to be able to provide students with opportunities to improve not only their reading and writing skills, a relatively easy goal to achieve in distance education, but also their listening and speaking skills. Studies to date are tentative in claiming that communication skills acquired in a written

environment can lead to spoken discourse competence (Chun, 1994, Hampel and Hauck, 2004).

In recent years, teachers on the cutting edge of distance education courses for languages have embraced technologies to engage distance learners in a more interactive learning environment than ever before. In addition to text-based instruction, today's innovative language teachers are using Java Applets and Shockwave movies to create hands-on exercises that reinforce vocabulary and grammar skills. Streaming audio and video are being used to enhance listening skills. However, access to these technologies and the technical expertise needed to build appropriate resources still represent a significant obstacle to most language teachers. Furthermore, the licensing cost of technologies that allow for the effective integration of oral communication is also a major barrier.

The assessment of oral language skills in online courses is equally challenging for instructors, yet it should not be neglected. Some instructors use the telephone for the assessment of students' oral skills while others have students submit cassette tapes with speech samples to be marked. Computer-based oral language testing holds promise of being a more efficient and reliable means of evaluating students' oral skills in an online course.

### **Oral Language Reinforcement and Assessment Via Computer**

Existing oral communication tools such as MSN Messenger provide synchronous chat functionality, and others allow for the submission of oral recordings to teachers for assessment, but all lack the type of integrated environment needed for presenting structured learning activities and tests. XpressLab is, in the authors' opinion, a practical and easy-to-use environment for teachers who want to be able to reinforce and assess oral skills online and it has been designed to respond to a myriad of teacher needs.

XpressLab provides an authoring template that teachers use to create their own questions, thus ensuring that the content will, unlike much of the commercially available foreign language software, reflect the vocabulary, grammar, and themes presented in the course. This is an important feature since it means that the software can be used by teachers of any second or foreign language regardless of their teaching syllabus.

Also important is that, in our experience, students place more value on this type of resource because they know that all of the material presented by the software has been created by their instructor and that it is important to their success in the course. CD ROM and Web sites that sometimes accompany textbooks can be excellent resources, but they frequently contain so much information that they can be overwhelming to students. This can lead to student frustration because they are unsure about how much of the material they are actually responsible for. In online environments, especially, it is important to avoid information overload (Johnson, 2003).

Because teachers can include a picture and/or text with each recorded question, a context for questions is established. Research shows that students learn best when they use language in context (Claybourne, 1999; Halliday, 1986; Johnson, 2003). Northrup and Tracy (1998) comment that visuals and audio are useful tools for all second language learners, and Brown (1987) points out that audio and visual prompts establish a context for the questions, thus helping to ensure that test questions have content validity. Johnson (2003) states that the use of graphics enhances student motivation. Jones (2002) reported that in situations where students engaged in listening activities without the support of graphics, students complained that the lack of adequate visual information was unfair. As one student said, “Some people are visual learners and I feel you are cheating people that learn that way by not providing that” (p. 33). And Jones Vogely (as cited in Jones 2002) explains that “visual support not only makes the topic more accessible to listeners who are more visual or spatial learners but also helps all listeners to relate personally with the topic, thus reducing the anxiety that can occur when they think they don’t know what’s being talked about” (p. 39).

The American Federation of Teachers (2000) suggests that “distance education students must have strong written communication skills; that cyberspace coursework may be more difficult for students whose personal learning styles depend heavily on visual and verbal cues” (p.6). They add that distance education may not be as effective for students with written communication deficits” (p.7). The software is interactive and may therefore appeal to students with different learning modalities: auditory, visual, and kinesthetic (Grasha and Yangarber-Hicks, 2000). Furthermore, because it allows students to post orally, it may be useful for use with students with special needs, especially those whose written communication skills are weak or hampered by disability.

## **Creating Activities and Questions**

The following is a list of suggested question and activity types that could be developed by teachers to assess or reinforce each of the 4 skills:

### **1. Listening and Speaking**

#### ***a. Vocabulary Recognition***

Questions can be used to determine whether students have learned vocabulary being taught. It is best to use a graphic that represents the target vocabulary as a prompt for the question. Questions could take the form of “What is this?” or the like.

#### ***b. Thematic Questions***

Using a picture prompt, teachers could ask questions related to a theme that had been presented in class. For example, if students had been taught how to talk about the weather in the target language, a series of questions related to

pictures of various weather conditions could be presented and questions about the weather could be posed for each picture.

### *c. Situational Questions*

Teachers could ask questions that would require students to speak about a situation suggested by a picture or text prompt. For example, if a picture of two people at a table in a restaurant were used, students could be asked to say what they thought the people were going to order or what they might be talking about. Or they could be asked what the people in the picture would do if they realized that they had forgotten their money.

### *d. Oral Recordings*

It is possible to use oral recordings as question prompts. For example, a portion of a class lecture could be recorded, and, after the students had listened to it, they could be required to respond to questions about the lecture or to summarize the lecture's key points.

## **2. Reading**

Questions can be used to measure a student's reading ability or reading comprehension. It is possible to use a text prompt rather than a picture prompt and ask students to read aloud what they see on the screen. A question could be as simple as asking students to read a word or a short sentence or it could require them to read a short passage. Teachers could also ask students to read a longer passage, but they would have to provide students with a handout sheet with the passage on it since longer passages won't fit into the space available for prompts.

Another possibility for reinforcing the reading skill would be to have the students do a cloze activity. In the text prompt certain words would be left out, and students would be required to read the paragraph aloud, filling it in with words that made sense in the overall context of the passage.

If teachers wanted to assess students' reading comprehension as opposed to their ability to read aloud, students could be asked to read a passage followed by questions designed to determine whether they had understood what they read. Alternatively, teachers could ask students to summarize in their own words what they had read.

## **3. Writing**

Teachers could use XpressLab to give an oral dictation to students. They would record what they wanted students to write and, as students listened they would write what they heard on a separate sheet of paper.

Teachers could also ask students to listen to a recorded passage and then ask them to summarize in writing what they had heard or to respond in writing to questions that were posed about the passage.

**The XpressLab Toolset**

The software is comprised of a suite of five tools: a practice tool, two tools that operate as oral threaded discussion forums, and two testing instruments.

**The Practice Tool**

Using the practice tool, teachers of traditional face-to-face courses can create computer-based activities designed to help students practice oral skills during class time. Additionally, teachers may choose to create computer-based oral activities that can be accessed by students via the Internet that will allow them to practice what has been taught in class outside of class time. Online instructors will rely on this capability to present to their students oral exercises designed to reinforce both the listening and speaking skills for both instructional and reinforcement purposes.

When students access practice exercises, they may record an oral response, listen to their recording, and then compare their response to a sample answer provided by the teacher. The sample answer allows teachers to provide an example for students, thus clarifying performance expectations and encouraging learning (Heide & Henderson, 2001). It also allows students to self-assess, something that is particularly important in online education. “Distance education students should be able to regularly assess their own learning as well as get feedback from others” (Southeastern Louisiana University, 1998, p.5

Figure 1 depicts what students see when doing a practice exercise. The graphic acts as a prompt for the question that the teacher has recorded: “What kind of animal is this?” Students simply click “play” and the recording plays automatically. By clicking the “record” button, students can record their answer to the question.



**Figure 1: Practice Exercise**

They can then click on the “compare” button to compare their answer to the sample answer recorded by the teacher.

In practice mode, work is self-paced, students can access exercises as frequently as they wish, and student recordings are not made available to the teacher for marking.

Rendall's research suggests that students like being able to replay questions and self-assess as frequently as they wish. She found that students "are motivated by the improvement in their own speed and accuracy of recall which they are able to monitor for themselves" (<http://www.cilt.org.uk/research/resfor2/rendall.htm>) as they work through computerized exercises and activities.

### **The Oral Threaded Discussion Tools**

Frequently second and foreign language instructors will want to assess the extended speech capabilities of their students. They will also want to provide their students with an opportunity to discuss issues that have been presented in class. The use of online journals and discussion forums encourages students to reflectively interact with various course topics that "promote growth beyond what regular instructor-and-student interactions provide" (Johnson, 2003, p. 41). And as Chester and Gwynne (as cited in Schulte, 2004) comment, "anecdotal evidence of student performance in asynchronous courses suggests that [they] promote participation in discussions by students who rarely, if ever, participate in discussions in face-to-face classes" (p. 7).

For these reasons, two additional tools were developed: an oral discussion forum and a student journal. Both function like a text-based threaded discussion forum except that students, instead of typing their comments, record oral responses. The oral discussion forum is public in that all students in the class are able to hear the comments posted by all of their classmates and they can post reactions to anyone in their class. It is structured like the established text threaded discussion forums that are common in course management systems. Oral postings are presented in the sequence in which they are submitted by students and postings are grouped by theme, thus allowing for multiple themes to be discussed simultaneously. Discussions can occur in near real time to simulate normal face-to-face classroom conversations.

Figure 2 depicts a discussion forum. The teacher of an online Spanish course made a recording asking students to introduce themselves to their classmates. She also wrote her instructions in the text box at the head of the discussion forum. Students were able to listen to the instructor's recording where she introduced herself and then record their own introductions. They were also able to listen to what their classmates had recorded and record comments back to them if they wished.

The student journal is private: only the student who recorded the comments and the instructor are able to hear what the student has posted. This tool is particularly useful when teachers want students to post answers to an assignment and they don't want other students to be able to hear possible answers prior to making their posting. It also enables teachers to mentor their

students by allowing them to post private feedback for individual students. Figure 3 depicts a student journal. The instructor has made the initial oral posting to her student and the student and teacher are able to continue recording oral postings as desired.

### Las Presentaciones

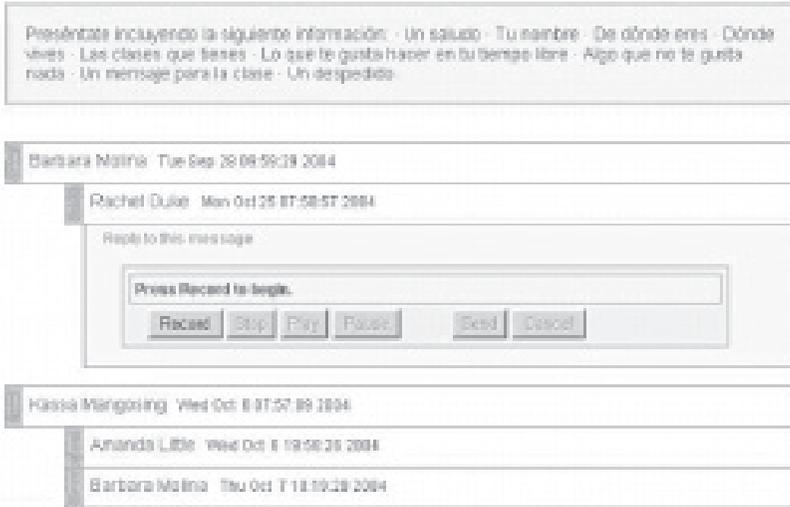


Figure 2: Discussion Forum

### Student Journal for **Wilson, Mark (6 posts, 1 new)**

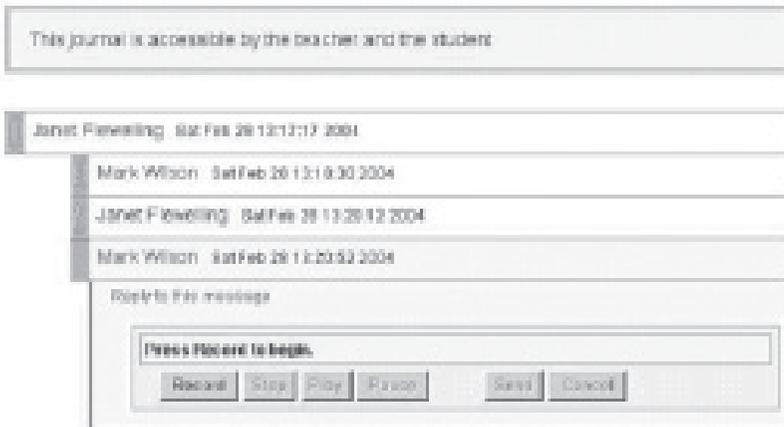


Figure 3: Student Journal

Instructors in traditional courses will likely have time for in-class discussions but they may wish to engage their students in online oral discussions

as homework to supplement what is done in class. Instructors of online courses will be able to use the online journal and discussion forum to give students an opportunity to engage in extended speech, something that has typically been missing from many online language courses.

### The Testing Tools

All students benefit from frequent assessment throughout a course, and this is particularly true of students in online courses (Simonson, et al., 2003). There are two testing tools in the software suite that offer teachers a way of assessing their students' oral skills online.

In the competency test, the instructor configures the software to control the pace of the test. The questions are presented in a timed fashion and the times for answer preparation and answer recording are pre-set by the teacher. Figure 4 depicts what students would see when taking a competency test.

The instructor has recorded a question to accompany the graphic prompt: "What is the weather like in this picture?" The amount of time allocated for answer preparation and answer recording is pre-set by the teacher. In this case the student has 10 seconds to record a response and then the test will proceed automatically to the next question. Students are not required at any time during the test to use the mouse or keyboard.

In the flex test, the students control the pace of the test. Students may record their answers as many times as the instructor configures the software to allow, and they only submit their answers when they are satisfied with their performance. The flex test reflects the mastery learning approach as opposed to a competency-based approach. Figure 5 depicts what students would see when taking a flex test. Students are able to listen to each question as many times as they wish before recording and submitting their answer to the instructor.

Both the competency and the flex tests are valid ways of assessing student competency and instructors will determine when use of each type of test is appropriate during their teaching program. Frequently teachers use flex tests

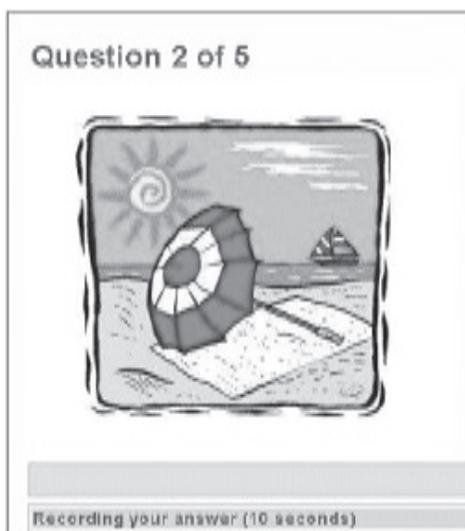


Figure 4: Competency Test

throughout a unit of study as formative evaluation and the competency test at the end of a unit for summative evaluation.

When teachers access student recordings, they are able to listen to the original questions, hear student responses, and then they are able to record comments and feedback

related to the students' answers. Students may then access their evaluated test and may listen to their responses and their teacher's feedback. Linking feedback so intimately with student responses makes the assessment more meaningful for students (Hall, 2000). The potential to offer students almost immediate feedback is especially important in an online framework since students can feel more isolated from the instructor and their classmates than they do in traditional teaching programs (American Federation of Teachers, 2000). In fact, the Distance Education Report (2003) cites that abundant and rapid feedback are the most important of its five characteristics of exemplary online courses.

The American Federation of Teachers (2000) comments that "distance education students should be able to regularly assess their own learning as well as get feedback from others" (p. 5). Because students can access their recorded answers and teacher feedback, they are in a position to assess their own competency. Crawford (1996) suggests that by reviewing their work, students will realize that the more they practice speaking, the more proficient they will become.

The advantage of being able to conduct oral testing online is clear for instructors of online courses, but there are advantages associated with online testing for instructors of traditional courses as well. Because students access tests via the Internet, it is possible to have an entire class take an oral test at once in a multimedia lab. This eliminates the need for hard-to-schedule, time-consuming and tiring one-on-one interviews with students. It also allows teachers the luxury of being able to mark the oral tests from any networked computer, at their convenience.

## Research Findings

XpressLab has been piloted in a number of elementary, secondary, and post-secondary institutions in Canada, the United States and Europe. Study results are preliminary, but they suggest a number of factors. Prior to their use of the software, 80% of the teachers indicated that they wished that they could assess their students' oral skills more frequently than they were but that barriers such as lack of time for one-on-one interviews prevented teachers from doing

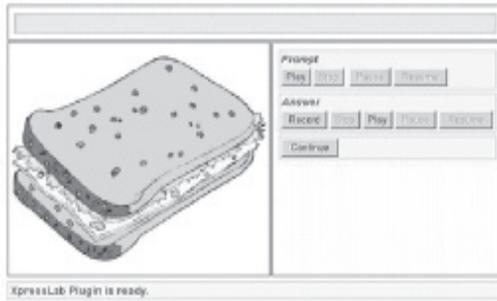


Figure 8: Flex Test

so. Teachers reported that because they could test an entire class of students at once using the software, they were able to do more frequent oral language assessments. All of the teachers indicated that they strongly believed that the practice exercises they created with the practice tool helped their students to prepare for oral tests and that they were more motivated to practice their oral language skills than in the past. 96% indicated that they wanted to continue to use the software to assess the oral skills of their students.

An initial concern expressed by some teachers was that it would take at least as much if not more time to evaluate student responses as if they were conducting one-on-one interviews with their students. In actual fact, they found that it took less time because their task was tightly focused on assessment alone. In online courses, since there is no face-to-face instruction, time that would normally be spent in class on discussions and oral language reinforcement can be redirected to online language assessment. In one pilot situation, an instructor gave oral tests to his 34 students every other week. In each test there were two questions. He reported that it took him less than one minute to evaluate each student's test and to record feedback. It should be noted that this instructor was teaching an introductory-level course and his tests targeted specific language tasks. Use of a rubric and careful question design helped him to focus on what to look for in student responses and to mark efficiently. In the case of more advanced level courses, students might be required to engage in more extended speech, and this would, of course, result in longer marking sessions. The instructor could compensate for this by not testing as frequently or by using teaching assistants, if available, to do some of the marking.

Student feedback was positive as well. In surveys, 86% indicated that they thought that the practice exercises helped them to prepare for oral language tests. 96% believed that their listening skills improved, and 88% thought that their speaking skills improved as a result of using the software. 96% valued the feedback feature of the software and 98% recommended that their instructor use the software in future courses.

The following are some of the more important lessons that have been learned over the past five years of the development and research process:

1. Many language departments and teachers appear to be under-resourced compared to other academic disciplines when it comes to money for software and technical support for information technology (I.T.) initiatives. Access to technical help and training personnel is often limited.
2. I.T. professionals, if available, are stretched so thinly that very limited time can be allocated to the acquisition, support and maintenance of sophisticated language systems. The time pressure that I.T. personnel are under has sometimes caused them to discourage the use of language software that they perceive as adding to their workload.
3. Software must be easy to learn and to use. This translates into a

need for minimal training time and reliable performance. It has been necessary to continually find ways to provide teachers with powerful functionality while maintaining ease of use. Software user guides are helpful, but in most cases, teachers and students expect software to be so intuitive that spending time with a manual is not necessary. In some cases, to achieve this goal, it is more advantageous to omit functionality that adds complexity to the learning curve or diminishes the intuitiveness of the software.

4. It is most desirable for software to be server-based so that it can be deployed on the school Intranet and the Internet. Server-based software also provides the means for more effective management of questions, tests, and student answer files. Network access increases flexibility for teachers and students, and it opens the door to the potential for sharing resources among teachers.
5. One benefit offered by technology is the ease with which instructors can create large banks of resource materials that can be used to supplement the textbook. Instructors must be careful, however, not to overload students with these resources. Students need to know what, out of all the resources available to them, are a mandatory part of a course and what are there for reference if desired. Too many technological resources in a course can overwhelm students and result in a backlash against technology use as well as the instructor.
6. Students involved in the piloting of the software have indicated that the skills they most want to acquire and improve are listening and speaking. Their experience, however, has been that most of their courses have emphasized the development of the reading and writing skills. Technology like the software used in this research project can help instructors address the oral skills in a more balanced fashion since it can so effectively facilitate oral language reinforcement and assessment.

As piloting continues, further research data will be collected on teacher and student reactions to computerized oral language reinforcement and testing in online learning environments.

### **Response to Research Findings**

Research into computer-based oral language reinforcement and assessment has led the authors to develop software tools that address teaching and learning needs. It has also helped them to identify barriers that teachers frequently face as they attempt to integrate technology into their teaching programs. In response to teachers' concerns about the lack of technical support available to them, the researchers offer to host the software on their server. This eliminates teacher dependency on a local server administrator and the need for required hardware. The client software is an Internet browser plug-in

that is very easy to download and install. To further their research interests, the authors make the software available at no cost to teachers willing to participate in a pilot study related to use of the software.

To date, the researchers have concentrated on developing tools for teachers and students using PCs running a Windows 98 or newer operating system. They recognize, however, the need for tools for Apple computer users, and they are now exploring methods for making the software cross-platform. Currently, users require a basic Pentium III multimedia computer with a network card and sound card, and a headset and microphone.

## Conclusion

Our experience and that of our students in using the software developed for this research has been extremely positive, but there are other possibilities available to teachers who wish to add a speaking component to their online course. An Internet search focusing on oral language testing via computer will suggest various options that can be considered.

Educators have a responsibility to make their foreign language courses as meaningful, relevant, and pedagogically sound as possible. Ensuring that students receive sufficient oral language reinforcement and assessment, whether the course be face-to-face or online, is a goal that should be met. By integrating technology into the teaching and assessment process, teachers may be better able to meet this goal.

## Note

Teachers who would be interested in piloting XpressLab should contact the authors via e-mail. Piloting is free of charge for the duration of a semester course. Piloting instructors and students are asked to complete a brief online survey about their experience using the software. Options for obtaining a license to use the software subsequent to the pilot period are available. For more information, please contact the authors.

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# Changes in Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction: Assessing Distance Applications to Foreign Language Learning

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Carolyn Gascoigne

University of Nebraska at Omaha

Most educators would agree that changes to and in foreign language curricula, assessment, and instruction appear to be developing at an impressive rate. These changes come from both within the profession (e.g., new textbooks, technologies, ancillaries, and methods) and beyond (e.g., administratively imposed scheduling or assessment requirements, national trends, and demographic changes).

One profound and highly debated change is the use of distance education technologies to mediate foreign language instruction. Distance education, unlike combined delivery or technological enhancements within a traditional setting, involves education or training that is delivered via computer or telecommunication to individuals that are geographically dispersed or separated by physical distance from the instructor (Belanger & Jordan, 2000).

## Pros and Cons

Those supporting the adoption of distance education typically cite its ability to diversify course offerings at smaller or remote institutions (Debski & Levy, 1999), its potential cost-effectiveness due to economies of scale (Rayburn & Ramaprasad, 2000, p. 55), and its interdisciplinary nature involving the subject matter, artificial intelligence, computational linguistics, instructional design, and human-computer interactions (Levy, 1997, p. 7). For Pasch and Norsworthy (2001), technology and distance education can provide exposure to other languages and cultures on an unprecedented scale, as well as open doors to language instruction at institutions where it is otherwise unavailable.

Arguments against distance education include the additional demands placed on faculty members who must transition course content to the new distance environment (Hatasa, 1999) and the costs associated with new or additional equipment, training, and support staff (Rayburn & Ramaprasad, 2000, p. 55). At times, additional bureaucratic impediments must be resolved. These can range from the scheduling and coordination of instruction, credit hour production, and head count among institutions, to the dual payment of fees, elevated out-of-state tuition, and ineligible financial aid or scholarships for some students (Foshee, 1999). According to Purcell-Robertson & Purcell (2000), students can leave the distance education experience feeling socially,

psychologically and physically disconnected from the instructor and their fellow students. Coleman (1991) fears that distance can negatively affect the perception and detection of paralinguistic features such as gesture, posture, facial expressions, and lip movements that are needed to help learners decode the verbal message.

### **Assessing the Situation**

The remaining portion of this short article summarizes the results of one department's attempt to qualitatively assess the success of a major change: the application of distance education to advanced foreign language courses. Three advanced courses (German Civilization, Russian Conversation, and Introduction to Russian Literature) taught to students at a home site and a distance site in the fall of 2002 at the University of Nebraska were examined.

The German course originated at the University of Nebraska at Kearney (UNK). The two Russian courses originated at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln (UNL). All three courses took place before students at the home institution and were simultaneously transmitted to distance learning students at the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO), and all were taught in the target language. The German civilization course focused on German history (society, economy, religion, and art). The Russian conversation course sought to improve students' conversational abilities and included practice in extended and spontaneous discourse. The introduction to Russian literature course involved out-of-class readings followed by in-class retellings and critical discussion.

Three to four television monitors allowed those in each classroom visual and audio access to those in the other. As the instructor spoke, he or she wore a lavalier microphone so that students at the remote site in Omaha (UNO) could hear the lecture and instructions. In order for students at the remote site to communicate with their instructor and students at the home site, they used a push-to-talk microphone that was placed in front of each student. Students at the home site also used a microphone to be heard by their distance counterparts.

The courses were essentially the traditional target language civilization, conversation, and introduction to literature courses that were also simultaneously transmitted to an additional location. There were no major alterations to course content, nor were there any other technological enhancements beyond the fiber optics, converter, monitors, microphones, and the Internet needed to replicate the classroom space for the distance students in Omaha. The distance students did, of course, have to rely on phone and email exchanges, as opposed to visiting the professor during office hours.

Assessment took place through surveys and interviews during the 2002 academic year, the third consecutive year in which the courses were taught via distance learning. Specifically, students and instructors completed a questionnaire and participated in random interviews (see Appendix for complete survey) in order to better understand their perceptions of distance

learning as applied to language learning. The surveys combined Likert-scale, short-answer, and open-ended questions. Instructors completed a modified survey and conferred individually or via email and phone with the author.

## Findings

The surveys revealed that students were frustrated by the physical environment. In fact, nearly every respondent offered suggestions for improving the physical situation. Their suggestions for improvement included acquiring new chairs; moving the camera to the front of the classroom so that the instructor could see all students, not just those seated in the center; eliminating the push-to-talk microphones; reducing the level of noise; and bringing the instructor to the distance site occasionally.

Students were also frustrated by the modest administrative red tape (the university required an additional registration form) and the reduced access to instructors. Surprisingly, 3 of the 29 students faced a loss of scholarships and other sources of aid. Although the university worked with students to help them recapture lost funds, it was nevertheless time consuming.

Of all students at both sites, 90% indicated that they would not take another distance learning class in a foreign language or that they would do so only if it were the only way to continue language study. The vast majority of students (90% of the distance students and 80% of the home students) felt that the distance nature of the course detracted from the goal at hand: interaction with and in the target language and culture. On a more positive note, students at both sites rated the course a relative success both in terms of their general satisfaction and the relation of course content to the distance medium. The apparent contradiction may be explained in relative terms: the courses were successful, although students maintained a clear preference for a more traditional classroom environment.

The instructors tended to share the concerns of the students. Each instructor indicated that he or she would have preferred to have taught the course without the distance component, that he or she experienced some sort of bureaucratic hurdle, and none of the instructors felt that the distance medium contributed to the goal of the course. Still, instructors reported acquiring several positive compensatory strategies as a result of the experience, such as increasing wait-time between questions and answers, repeating oneself, and speaking louder, more slowly, and more clearly.

### *Dealing with Change*

This department has decided to reject the use of distance education in foreign language courses and has, after a three-year trial with the new medium, returned to face-to-face language instruction in all language courses. Technology remains an important part of classroom instruction but no longer

constitutes the sole medium of instruction in these courses. Although the subheading of this section may be inaccurate to some readers (for whom it might be more appropriately entitled “Avoiding Change”), we believe that this major development in the profession has been embraced, implemented, and examined by the department. However, it is clear that not every new method, medium, or material is appropriate for every institution, instructor, or student.

The implications of this inquiry suggest that institutions seeking to implement distance learning language courses should be certain to develop a comfortable and well-designed physical environment, with particular attention paid to seating and acoustics. Similarly, fluid administrative integration across participating institutions must also be achieved, including coordinated course listings, shared registration procedures, and regulated financial aid processes. While attention to course content and goals should remain paramount, it is important to note that students and faculty can be profoundly affected by extracurricular aspects of the distance learning experience as well.

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## *APPENDIX*

### **Distance Education Survey**

Please circle (or insert) your responses to the following questions where appropriate.

1. How would you rate the success of interaction between the teacher and the students at the distance site (UNO)?

5	4	3	2	1
(Very Successful)			(Unsuccessful)	

2. How would you rate the success of interaction between students at the distance site (UNO) and students at the home site?

5	4	3	2	1
(Very Successful)			(Unsuccessful)	

3. How would you rate the success of interaction among students at the distance site (UNO) with one another?

5	4	3	2	1
(Very Successful)			(Unsuccessful)	

4. How would you rate the success of interaction among students at the home site with one another?

5	4	3	2	1
(Very Successful)			(Unsuccessful)	

5. How would you rate your overall satisfaction with the social context (i.e., a sense of belonging, emotional support) of the distance education course?

5	4	3	2	1
(Very Satisfied)			(Dissatisfied)	

6. How did the presence of hardware technology affect your level of comfort in the class?

Increased comfort	No effect	Decreased comfort
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7. Over the course of the semester, how has your comfort level with the hardware technology changed?

Increased	Remained the same	Decreased
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30. Do you feel that the distance learning nature of this course increased your contact and interaction with the target language and culture?

Yes or No? If yes, please describe.

31. Additional comments:

# Challenges and Triumphs of Communicative Distance Instruction

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**Lisa Fournier Kowaleski**

**Darcy Lear**

**Janice Macián**

The Ohio State University

**T**echnology has long been touted as a way to enhance language instruction. Through video, satellite television, World Wide Web, and electronic mail it brings distant cultures into the classroom (Armstrong and Yetter-Vassot, 1994; Cummins & Sayers, 1997; Dernoshek & Lomicka, 2002; Lee, 1998; Rogers & Wolff, 2000; Rose, 1995; Terrell, 1993; Warschauer, 1995; Warschauer, 1996; Warschauer, 1997; Warschauer, 2000; Warschauer, 2001). It was often assumed that second language learning's "fundamental reliance on live interaction with proficient speakers of the target language" (Ervin, 1993, p. 12) limits the usefulness of technology in the teaching of languages. However, technology now provides for live interaction. Foreign language classes are becoming increasingly involved in distance learning due in part to the innovations presented via technological advancements and in part as a result of the economic challenges facing educational institutions. In order to meet the demands of increasing enrollments, despite diminishing budgets and available qualified instructors (Macián, 2001), the Ohio State University (OSU) has been no exception to this expanding trend. At OSU, the interest in distance education stems from both a need to develop an outreach program to area high schools interested in offering an intermediate level language course on their own campuses and a desire to remain abreast of the most current technological advancements.

During the 2000 Autumn quarter, a distance learning course based on video conferencing was piloted in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at OSU with the support of the College of Humanities, The Foreign Language Center, and the Department of Technology Enhanced Learning and Research (TELRL), which provides funding for distance learning, distance education, online courses, Web-based courses, and Web-enhanced courses at OSU. Since this time, the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at OSU, in conjunction with New Albany High School in New Albany, Ohio, has offered a distance education Spanish course during the Autumn quarter only. The high school students enrolling in the course are admitted to The Ohio State University through the Academy Program. "This program is The Ohio State implementation of the Post-Secondary Enrollment Options Program created by the state of Ohio and is a partnership between Ohio State, the high school, and

the student and his or her parents” (The Ohio State University, 2004). Students must meet the eligibility requirements that include a grade point average of 3.5 or higher, ACT or Plan scores of 26 or higher, SAT score of 1180 or higher, or PSAT score of 118 (verbal and math) or higher, and recommendation of the high school counselor or principal (The Ohio State University, 2004).

Spanish 104D is an intermediate course that includes reading of Spanish short stories, plays, and novels with attention to literary appreciation, as well as continued development of basic language skills. For four years this course has evolved and developed as a way to offer a distance learning experience that provides students with opportunities to engage in group discussions, activities, and interchanges in the target language similar to those that emerge in the traditional classroom setting.

It is important to clarify from the outset the parameters of any distance education course, since the word *distance* may imply any number of interfaces, ranging from no face-to-face contact or interaction with the instructor, to complete interaction with the instructor mimicking that of the traditional classroom via teleconferencing, in spite of geographically distinct locations (Glisan, Dudt, & Howe, 1998, pp. 48-49). The intermediate Spanish course offered at OSU does not allow for independent learning. It is time and place dependent but occurs simultaneously in two places through video conferencing technology. In this case, distance education implies physical separation between the teacher and some of the learners. The course description explicitly states that students at both locations must be physically present in the classroom five days a week for class meetings. In terms of student population, class setting, instructional techniques and methods, and assessment environment, Spanish 104D had been challenged to follow the traditional Spanish 104 curriculum and calendar to the day, despite the fact that delivery, interface, and demographics were completely different from the traditional Spanish 104 courses offered. Making the course completely independent of the traditional Spanish 104 classes was a change implemented in Autumn 2004. It is this change that this paper addresses.

Upon conclusion of the Autumn 2003 quarter, course evaluation included an analysis of the student evaluations, feedback from instructors (past and present), and student achievement. This revealed a need for changes. Additionally an independent study on distance learning led the authors to realize that the current literature in the field of distance learning presented compelling issues that had to be considered in order to maximize the potential of the distance learning course for all those involved: the students, the instructors, and the academic institution. Changes as described in this paper are presented as organized by goals and objectives, structural and curricular changes of the course, and future course direction.

### **Goals and objectives**

The underlying belief at OSU is that distance learning can be consonant with the current goals and approaches to language instruction with concerted

and focused effort. Spanish 104D is taught entirely in the target language with students expected to engage in the use of the target language for classroom work and activities. Our goals and instructional approaches include incorporating the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning* (National Standards, 1996) into the curriculum, providing students with opportunities to create and use the language in situations that mimic real world settings, and providing vast amounts of comprehensible input, believed necessary for successful development of various language skills (Lee & VanPatten, 2003, pp. 26-27). Challenges include encouraging student interaction, evaluating student responses, and enforcing the use of the target language via the television. The following reasons explain these challenges: an instantaneous and spontaneous reaction can be hampered by transmission; a student reaction may occur but the camera is not focused on the speaker therefore reducing the impact; or someone speaks without the camera focused on her or him, making it difficult for others to follow. There are also moments when hearing is limited or it becomes difficult to discern who exactly is speaking.

Therefore, although we saw the need to keep the goals of the traditional classroom within the parameters of the course objectives, we accepted that we had to create a model better suited to the environment and medium of instruction. In other words, certain communicative activities cannot be conducted in the same way as in the traditional classroom, and certain activities can not be successfully or effectively executed in the distance environment unless they are modified to reflect the environment. To begin our restructuring, clear and specific goals and objectives were established for the instructors and the supervisors of the course (see Appendix). These were developed and evaluated by the Spanish 104 Supervisor, the Spanish Language Program Director, and former and current Spanish 104 instructors. Upon approval by all, the goals and objectives were disseminated to current instructors, supervisors, and support people prior to the commencement of the Autumn 2004 quarter. By ensuring that all involved in the distance learning course understood the expectations of the course, some of the obstacles that arose in the past for both students and instructors due to a lack of understanding of the duties and obligations demanded by the course were avoided.

Learner expectations and goals were also a component of the course restructuring. Because the nature of the distance learning experience is such that the degree to which direct teacher intervention can occur is limited, it is important that students be willing, ready, and mature enough to set personal goals for learning, monitor their learning, and employ their own unique learning strategies and materials for achievement. As Smith, Murphy, and Mahoney (2003) report in their study of undergraduate students' readiness for online learning, many students actually have a low preference for this medium of instruction, limited technology skills, and weakness in the area of self-direction (pp. 57-58). At OSU, the course description was modified to reflect the uniqueness of 104D, and students were informed of expectations prior to the start of class and during the first session.

## **Course Planning and Curricular Changes**

The importance of training in the use of the technology involved in any distance education course cannot be understated. In order to keep technological elements secondary to pedagogical concerns, institutions interested in offering distance education courses must recruit teachers who are actively using technology in their teaching. A certain degree of comfort with using and troubleshooting equipment is essential to the success of the course. No matter how complicated or problematic the technology, the teacher must employ the technology with ease and comfort so that it does not dominate the class. Likewise, it is essential that the institution provide the necessary technical support so that the teacher can quickly and easily access help with troubleshooting technical problems.

At OSU, the typical classroom orientation session, which used to last approximately fifteen minutes, was expanded to include numerous hands-on classroom sessions with an experienced instructor. Sessions included learning to control and operate all of the technology: the camera, the two televisions, and the document viewer. One remote control allowed access to the remote site, control of the cameras in both classrooms, and the ability to toggle among the video camera, the document viewer, and the VCR in the onsite classroom. The experienced instructor was also present in the actual class during the first week and whenever requested to assist the classroom instructor.

It is also practical for students to have knowledge of the equipment operation in order to facilitate class sessions. Having students minimally trained to start up, connect to the remote site, and shut down the equipment, saves valuable class time that can be utilized for instructional and student activities. Students from both sites facilitate this whenever possible. Students should also be familiar with the operation of other equipment to support their own attempts at communication when working in groups. However, discretion and caution is advised as awkward situations can arise. For example, an instructor may attempt to call the remote location when that site's equipment is not yet on and therefore no connection can be made, thus not saving any time; classes may connect and transmit their "before class" banter which may include inappropriate topics of discussion given the age difference of the college students and the high school students; or sites may be connected without realizing it and engage inadvertently in conversations not intended for those at the other sites.

A key factor of a study by Sims, Dobbs, and Hand (2002) is a team for designing content and instruction. This is a critical aspect of online and distance education given the need to understand the many factors and layers of influence that are related to the development of effective resources (Sims, Dobbs, & Hand, 2002, p. 147). It is apparent and logical that numerous perspectives and positions can help to increase the quality of all aspects of the course. The team concept was a major focus for the Autumn 2004 quarter, with the

team expanded to include the technology support people from the high school location, former instructors of Spanish 104, an additional support person at the OSU site, and the curriculum director for the high school program. In order to establish the importance of collaboration among the administration from both OSU and New Albany High School, the OSU classroom instructor and the classroom facilitator, and the supervisors and the OSU classroom instructor, the team approach was exploited to the extent possible. To promote the team concept, frequent class observations by the OSU supervisors via the OSU location provided support for the instructors and students. Frequent contact with all parties involved in the distance learning endeavor, increased student contact between students and classroom instructors participating in the course, and frequent contact between the supervisors and the classroom instructors all served to promote the team concept. Any foreign language class taught via distance learning must search for ways to maintain the interaction and communication between and among students and the instructor. The question becomes how to provide access to this interaction in a course that is by nature less physically interactive than a traditional classroom setting where all participants are in the same location (Sims, 2003).

As in the traditional classroom, students in distance contexts can develop the ability to interact with others and create with the language with the help of the teacher and her or his choices of instructional methodology and classroom activities. The challenge is getting students to develop the ability within the distance learning context. In many ways, the distance learning medium separates and isolates the students, and the teacher must exploit opportunities for communication and interaction, especially across locations. However, students at the same location frequently and easily interact in meaningful tasks.

As a first response to students' need for appropriate interaction, and challenging and appropriate activities, a Web site was developed in the Summer of 2002 for use in the subsequent Autumn quarter. The material on the site supplemented Spanish 104D at OSU, consisting mostly of ancillary activities for, or enhancements of, class activities as they reflected the traditional 104 curriculum. Learners had autonomous opportunities to examine conceptual, deductive information while applying it to concrete, inductive examples. Additionally the Web site provides ample visuals and allowed students the time needed to absorb classroom material presented during daily sessions. To better address students' needs, we recognize that a more interactive Web site is needed, and it is currently under construction. The intention is to provide a greater range of possible activities in order to move toward addressing various learning styles of students, especially those that can not be effectively addressed during the class sessions, such as collaboration, exploiting visuals, and sufficient time for absorption (Felder, 1995, pp. 28-29). The belief is that assigning students activities outside of class may allow them to create and use the language, but having these activities pre-established and included as part of the activities and homework prior to the beginning of the course may allow students the time needed to collaborate and execute the assignments.

Guidelines for students to engage in a minimum of two organized chat sessions during the course, which will be evaluated by the instructor, are also included. By providing students with automated feedback on homework and activities via the Web site, class time can be freed up and used for activities that provide them with opportunities to create and use language. This is especially important given the difference in the two groups of students (college and high school) in the OSU model. The high school students are accustomed to and demand the social relationship that is so prevalent in the high school setting, a relationship that is commonly very intense between a high school language teacher and her or his students. The college students are not as accustomed to this intensity in relationships with instructors and their classmates, as a result of their adjustment to large class size and the university atmosphere. However, college students enjoy and thrive in an environment where they are a valuable member of the course and not just a face without a name. Thus an interactive Web site not only can facilitate the communication between the instructor and the students, it can also provide students opportunities to communicate with each other. Beginning in Autumn 2005, the students will participate in interaction with classmates and instructors via the interactive Web site. A concern for developing the Web site is that the maintenance of a specialized Web site of any type (interactive or informational) demands more personal time than is required of those instructors who teach the traditional class. This is a key reason that this site will not be completed until 2005.

In order to eliminate the "homogeneity" of all activities (one side of the camera always working with people on the same side, and one side of the camera obviously having more access to the instructor than the other), it was necessary to create activities that forced the students to interact with each other. Student survey responses support the challenges cited in communication. When asked about being able to interact with students at the other school, responses included: "It was harder to ask questions and harder to interact," "it kind of felt like we were separated," "moving the camera around for group projects takes a longer amount of time to get things done," "it was difficult to truly interact with them except through email," and "it was hard when we were in groups and all needed to talk to each other." For many distance education courses described in the current literature, interactivity across the distance is not vital (Alosh, 2001; Cárdenas, 1998; Faulhaber, 1996). During the Autumn 2004 course, the instructors and supervisors determined that forcing students to communicate via the methods employed in the traditional classroom did not provide the most effective instruction. Instead, students interacted with each other by working on activities that sought to exploit the presentational skills via different activities from the traditional classroom. For example, instead of students working in groups with members at the other location attempting to complete communicative activities, groups were composed of students at the same location. These student groups presented and instructed to the other location, thereby utilizing their skills for interpersonal and presentational communication, facilitating the coordination of communication

and collaboration between students, and still allowing for group accountability. Group presentations were comprised of presenting readings from the text as the number of readings included on the syllabus dramatically increased and other activities were eliminated. The reading presentations were clearly defined for students and included original interactive class activities to gauge comprehension and synthesis of the material by the other students. The changes implemented were well received and proved challenging for the students and the instructors as the pace was brisk in order to maintain the momentum and accomplish the goals for the course.

Instructor and facilitator training must make clear that distance learning courses demand a higher work load for instructors and students (Davis, 2003). Typical activities that occur during traditional class sessions are often removed from the distance learning experience. Examples of the extra demands placed on the distance learning instructor, aside from the normal planning and preparation, include reading and answering questions and homework via email (as it is the primary means of communication between the satellite students and the instructor), sending work to students or the class facilitator via email or through the US mail, traveling to the satellite location for materials exchange, and planning and accounting for the schedule differences between the high school and the university. In surveys, OSU students reported effective distribution of materials. While half of the remote-site students agreed with the assessment of their counterparts at OSU, other students at the remote site reported they “got tests late” and “sometimes they arrived late in the mail.” Students were particularly concerned about receiving graded tests. Past instructors have hand-delivered and then graded tests, while others have used the mail. A protocol for testing was established for the Autumn 2004 quarter, which did facilitate certain aspects of testing.

There was a similar difference in opinion regarding turning in homework via email. Because the homework protocol is determined by the instructor each time the course is taught, it frequently varies as a result of changes in instructors. Survey responses indicate that students at OSU found emailing homework increased their flexibility, with comments such as, “It was nice being able to email homework,” while remote-site students noted that the “process was fine, yet it was difficult if we forgot to print it out from the previous night,” “sometimes there were problems with email, but it wasn’t very often,” and “I didn’t like it because the OSU students had more time to finish.” This perceived injustice could be corrected by requiring all students to email homework and print out a personal copy to bring to class. In that way all would theoretically experience the same technical difficulties and face the same time restrictions. However, the instructor would have to grade all the homework via email, which may be more taxing than correcting hard copies of documents. All instructors are and will be advised to determine the protocol for homework and to be prepared to inform all students on the first day of class.

## Future Directions and Conclusion

After teaching Spanish 104D as a separate entity from the traditional 104 classes for the first time this autumn, we still face significant challenges. Time is an impeding factor given the length of each class session and the quarter system. Longer but less frequent class periods could serve to alleviate the need for more time to successfully execute collaborative activities that demand that students communicate in meaningful and interactive tasks. The precedent must be set forth that the responsibilities of the classroom facilitator at the satellite location include assisting and facilitating interactive activities, as the success of the activity depends heavily on assistance at the remote site. The interactive Web site is needed, but is extremely labor intensive in its development.

Technology will continue to be a part of foreign language education. The benefits of being able to bring the target language and culture into the classroom via technology have been established and accepted (Lear, 2003). Based on experiences, response from the students, and knowledge gained from the literature, it appears that weaving traditional classroom instruction through a distance environment enhances distance learning rather than diminishes it. Students can have the benefit of an intense language experience without leaving their geographic location if the distance learning course meets the following criteria: expectations and outcomes are clearly articulated to students and instructors prior to the course, all instructors receive appropriate and significant training, and it is well designed and planned with regard to the aspects demanding modifications to the traditional curriculum. Additional class time; continued evaluation of goals, objectives, and outcomes; and greater control over variables linked to success, may serve to facilitate the measurement of success and shape the degree of success for students.

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## APPENDIX

### Expectations for Spanish 104D

#### Expectations: **Classroom instructor**

- Conduct all classes in the target language.
- Communicate with students on a daily basis via teleconferencing equipment, email, telephone, or face to face.
- Determine method for submitting homework and projects, and communicate this to the students on during the first class session.
- Develop clear and explicit expectations for students, and distribute these expectations during the first class session.
- Maintain a class email list in order to communicate with students and classroom facilitator.
- Revise, update, and maintain website for Spanish 104D course. Website to include more interactive activities in an attempt to engage the students in the target language outside of class sessions.
- Distribute as many curriculum materials as possible to classroom facilitator prior to the commencement of the course. Distribute tests a minimum of two days prior to the exam in order to provide time for the classroom facilitator to examine the test and address any questions. This will ensure that classroom facilitator can answer students' questions that may arise during the exam session.
- Communicate regularly with tech support in order to maximize all possible options for class sessions, and in order to increase knowledge

to help with troubleshooting.

- Communicate regularly with classroom facilitator in order to coordinate and articulate instructional efforts, and effective execution of curriculum.
- Communicate regularly with coordinators in order to communicate concerns, develop effective and appropriate curriculum materials, evaluate changes, and propose curriculum and class innovations.

Expectations: **Classroom facilitator**

- Conduct classroom exchanges and facilitator duties in the target language.
- Initiate and conclude all class sessions in order to ensure that equipment functions, students are on task, materials are distributed.
- Facilitate activities at the satellite the location with the students.
- Monitor and administer tests to students at satellite location to ensure security and confidentiality of tests, including reading of the listening comprehension. (Read 2x for students) Mail tests to classroom instructor following the administration of the test. (tests delivered to office secretary and sent to Instructor at OSU)
- Communicate with classroom instructor and students as necessary via teleconferencing equipment, email, telephone, or face to face.
- Communicate regularly with tech support in order to maximize all possible options for class sessions, and in order to increase knowledge to help with troubleshooting.
- Communicate regularly with classroom instructor in order to coordinate and articulate instructional efforts, and effective execution of curriculum.
- Communicate regularly with supervisors and administration in order to communicate concerns, evaluate changes, and propose class innovations.

Expectations: **104 Supervisor (support for classroom instructor)**

- Communicate with classroom instructor and facilitator on a regular basis via teleconferencing equipment, email, telephone, or face to face. This communication is to provide support, answer any questions, problem solve, address issues that arise throughout the course. Means of support include but are not limited to, classroom observations, meetings, conferences with administrators, supervisors, instructors at both locations, email and phone communication, visits to satellite location as needed.
- Assist classroom instructor with revision, updating, and maintenance of website for Spanish 104D.
- Assist the classroom instructor in distributing curriculum materials to classroom facilitator prior to the commencement of the course.

Ensure that tests are distributed a minimum of two days prior to the exam in order to provide time for the classroom facilitator to examine the test and address any questions that s/he may have regarding the activities on the test.

- Develop alternatives to traditional 104 assignments such as the individual oral report, and the in-class composition.
- Facilitate the implementation of the alternative assignments working with both the classroom instructor and classroom facilitator.
- Assist classroom instructor with tech support communication in order to maximize all possible options for class sessions, and in order to increase knowledge to help with troubleshooting.
- Oversee and facilitate communication between classroom instructor and facilitator in order to coordinate and articulate instructional efforts, and effective execution of curriculum. Promote team approach to instruction.
- Communicate regularly with supervisors and administrators in order to communicate concerns, develop effective and appropriate curriculum materials, evaluate changes, and propose curriculum and class innovations.

# Computers in the Modern Language Classroom: Voice Recordings and PowerPoint as Tools for Student Empowerment

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**Jeanette Hecker**

Cincinnati Country Day School

The integration of technology into the modern language classroom has been at the forefront of issues facing modern language teachers for over ten years. The Internet has become our passport for virtual visits to countries, cities, historical sites, and museums. Train schedules, subway maps, and restaurant menus, once the coveted treasure of those who spent their summers abroad, are now just a click away. While the computer has clearly enriched the modern language classroom, many of us have found that when computers enter the language classroom, the target language exits. Among the five stated goals of language learning – communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities – the computer is not included. The computer is not a sixth C, but rather a tool to help achieve the five C's. The question then is how can we as language teachers capitalize on the computer while continuing to focus on the target language? Our challenge is to successfully integrate the computer without compromising the goal of communicative competency. This article focuses on three activities that capitalize on the sound recorder and PowerPoint software to promote student production of the target language.

In a typical modern language classroom, students are expected to repeat dialogues, write skits, and do brief oral presentations. To perform in front of peers, whether in one's mother language or another language, can be a stressful experience for a student. This performance anxiety raises the affective filter, thus reducing the student's ability to acquire the target language. The computer, specifically the sound recorder, can provide the means for a student to speak the language without the potential embarrassment of making mistakes or being corrected in front of peers. The sound recorder is an accessory available in Microsoft Windows operating software and is found under Start→Programs→Accessories→Sound Recorder. Instead of performing for the class, a student can record monologues or dialogues with a partner, save the recording, and either drop it in the teacher's drop box on the school's server or e-mail the recording as an attachment to the teacher. In addition to reducing the student's affective filter, sound recordings allow the instructor to evaluate each student's oral production of the language more effectively because the recording can be played more than once. All in all, the sound recorder proves a useful tool in the quest for competency in the target language.

In addition to the sound recorder, PowerPoint software has revolutionized modern language instruction. Some textbooks now come with pre-prepared PowerPoint presentations of grammar topics. In the classroom, teachers are exchanging the overhead transparency machine for laptops and projectors and are preparing slide shows to illustrate language lessons. However, PowerPoint has primarily been under the power of the teacher, not the student. In a student's hands PowerPoint can be empowering. The use of PowerPoint addresses multiple learning styles. It allows verbal/linguistic learners to demonstrate, give examples, and teach. Logical/mathematical learners can find examples, develop an analysis, and outline the main points. Visual/spatial learners can design, illustrate, represent and show what they have learned. Interpersonal learners can communicate, discuss, and share their ideas.

The first PowerPoint activity is entirely student-driven and asks students to create a slide show to demonstrate comprehension of grammatical structures as a review for the final exam. For their PowerPoint slide show presentation, students are to demonstrate, illustrate, or find examples of specific vocabulary or structures studied throughout the semester. For example, in a French II class, students have to include the difference between the reflexive and non-reflexive usage of certain verbs (i.e., *appeler/s'appeler*), irregular verb conjugations, and the use of idiomatic expressions. Presentations are sent electronically to the teacher for an initial assessment and returned with indications of the errors to be corrected. In class, the week before the final exam, the PowerPoint slide shows are shared and thus provide a necessary review of the semester's material. Examples of student work from Cincinnati Country Day School are available online at <http://www.f.countryday.net/FacStf/us/heckerj> (click on OFLA 2004). Students' work is assessed for how well the images convey content and how useful the review is for the exam.

The second example of how the computer can empower students combines the sound recorder with PowerPoint software. In order to prepare students for an oral exam, the teacher creates two PowerPoint presentations. In the first, each slide is a question or prompt to elicit a targeted response. In the second, each slide consists of a question to elicit an open-ended answer. To accompany the visual prompt, each slide includes a sound recording of a native speaker asking the question. Sound recordings can be added to slides in PowerPoint by going to Insert→Movies and Sounds→Record a Sound. The pop-up window looks like the buttons on a tape recorder. After recording your voice, a speaker icon appears on the slide. Students have access to both PowerPoint slide shows in advance of the oral exam. Although prepared by the teacher, students are able to scroll through the prompts, listen to the recordings of the questions, and practice the responses as many times as necessary. On the day of the oral exam, students pick numbers corresponding to the questions or prompts. The teacher reads the questions and assesses the student's response. Once again, the affective filter is reduced because students have seen and heard the questions in advance and have practiced appropriate responses.

The final PowerPoint project asks students to create a slide show of monuments or sites in Paris and provide voice-over narration. Pictures of Paris and its sites can easily be found via a Web search on Google. Students are instructed to search for and select fifteen slides of Paris. They are to sequence the slides as they would organize a trip to Paris. Then, using the voice-over narration found in PowerPoint software under Slide Show→Record Narration, the student can record his or her trip to Paris. When the dialogue window appears, the student clicks on OK. The program starts to show the slides and the student records what he or she wants to say for each slide. An arrow click allows the student to advance to the next slide. After recording what he or she wants, the student saves the work. Students can either present their show in class or send it to the teacher for evaluation. This project can target many different structures, for example, by having students plan a past, present, or future trip to Paris. If shown in class, other students can evaluate the slide show using a rubric sheet. Peer assessment also creates a communicative situation among students. If the listeners do not understand something in the narration, they must ask for clarification.

Both the sound recorder and PowerPoint software are proving to be two appropriate uses of the computer in the language classroom. Most importantly, these two applications do not exile the target language from the classroom, but rather work as tools to achieve the goals of language learning. The sound recorder allows a teacher to reduce the affective filter that occurs when students are asked to perform in front of peers. Voice recordings allow a more private experience while nevertheless requiring and assessing the student's oral production of the language. Likewise, PowerPoint software has proven to be an effective tool in the language classroom, even more so when put into the students' hands. PowerPoint addresses multiple learning styles, from the analytical to the creative to the interpersonal. While computers in the language classroom have made connections with other cultures possible, communication still relies on proficiency in the language. Our challenge remains to successfully integrate the computer into the world language classroom without compromising the goals of language learning.



# Teaching Cultures: A Bringing Together of Cultures, Cultural Elements, and Resources.

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**Melissa Kentner**

Worthington Kilbourone High School (OH)

I don't teach culture. I don't have time. There's too much to cover in the curriculum to do food and fiestas." These comments, expressed by a high school Spanish teacher, may be common among foreign language (FL) teachers; however, her sentiments presented a plethora of questions that FL teachers should explore about the nature of teaching culture to all levels of students. Is culture an inherent aspect of language teaching? Are FL teachers doing a disservice to their students when they exclude discussions of culture and current events from their curricula? Can the linguistic content of FL teaching and learning truly be decontextualized and compartmentalized from cultural information? Is it the unfamiliarity that FL teachers often feel about the target cultures that dissuade them from teaching culture?

It is likely that this teacher, like many in the field, had few opportunities to learn about the teaching of cultures in her pre-service education. Additionally, any training in the teaching of cultures was likely geared toward culture capsules or a superficial *food and festivals* approach rather than activities and discussions that "help students acquire the sensitivity to understand deeper cultural values" (Heusinkveld, 1985, p. 321).

Within the *National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project* (National Standards, 1996), culture is conceptualized not only as a tool for teaching a foreign language, but is regarded as a major reason for studying another language and a significant component of the teaching and learning process. In light of the Standards, many FL teachers may need to reexamine their philosophies and practices. FL teachers must continually make connections between the classroom and the target countries, communities, and cultures. FL teachers should help students better understand their own cultures as frames of reference and help them construct their notion of the target cultures. This may be done in the FL classroom where teachers and students have the ideal context for discussing local and global events and critically discussing issues of discrimination, marginalizing, stereotyping, and multiculturalism. The ultimate goal for learning a FL should be a greater awareness of and an appreciation for diverse cultures, not simply memorizing isolated verb structures. Goals aimed predominately at target language proficiency must be revised to integrate language and culture to help students develop critical language awareness. With the commitment to teaching cultures and an awareness of the interdependent nature of language and culture, students and teachers may gain a greater understanding of peoples throughout the world.

In Lange's (1999) chapter, "Planning for and Using the New National Culture Standards," he lays the groundwork for developing curriculum, assessment, and instruction based upon the Standards (National Standards, 1996) and their cultural orientation toward understanding how the target cultures' perspectives relate to their practices and products. The approaches he describes are emancipatory, and the emphasis is placed on learner performance rather than teacher behaviors. Lange's chapter is an excellent resource for understanding the major philosophical and pedagogical changes that must begin to take place in FL classrooms in the next decade in order to meet the language and cultural goals students deserve. He incorporates Gardner's (1993) work with multiple intelligences as a guide for curriculum development. Additionally, he provides theoretical information and pragmatic ideas for cultural assessment based upon the Standards (National Standards, 1996) as well as Wiggins' (1993) work with assessment. Lange posits that, traditionally, assessment of culture learning was meager. However, the national standards' sample progress indicators provide direction for developing authentic and meaningful assessment activities. It is a daunting task to transform curriculum, assessment, and instruction; however, teachers *can* commit to making small, incremental changes toward integrating culture and language teaching. Furthermore, they need to allow time to become comfortable and confident with the changes before integrating additional modifications. Although the Standards provide a guideline, there is still little research and information about *how* to teach cultures.

In a qualitative study of two outstanding secondary Spanish teachers who commit to the teaching of cultures, there were several salient characteristics of culture teaching found through data analysis. The characteristics are included here as an impetus to begin a change process for better integrating language and culture, rather than as a prescription for teaching.

**Culture lessons are thematic and recursive.** These are two elements that Lange stresses in his chapter. Themes may be based upon countries, social issues such as stereotyping and discrimination, and topics such as food or friendship; themes also may be derived from current global events. Teachers start with the theme and then build the vocabulary and grammar around it. These same themes are built into the curriculum for subsequent years of language study so students can deepen their understanding as they mature and improve their language skills.

**Teachers plan for depth over breadth.** Rather than attempting to cover as much grammar as possible within one school year, in their selected units, teachers include the grammar and vocabulary necessary to support learning and understanding of the important themes.

**There is a bringing together of cultures.** Teachers give their students opportunities to view their own frames of reference and to view their North American cultures (practices, products, and perspectives). They then involve students in activities to make comparisons and contrasts with their own cultures and the target cultures.

**There is a bringing together of cultural elements, such as history, geography, literature, appropriate vocabulary, and the arts.** While participating in a unit on discrimination, for example, students read articles from local newspapers about current events related to discrimination. Students learn vocabulary to support this unit and describe/define discrimination; they learn grammar (past and future tenses) so they may discuss times when they were discriminated against and what they will do in the future to combat discrimination. Students discuss issues of discrimination in target language countries and how they may correct social inequities. Thus they are learning both culture and grammar.

**There is a bringing together of cultural resources.** In a unit on a particular theme, students are given opportunities to learn from different resources and practice vocabulary and grammar drawn from those resources. For example, a unit on a particular country may consist of a story by a native author, lyrics from a native band, native speakers as guests in the classroom, a movie, food, current events discussions, and visiting local resources.

The cultural assessment in which these teachers were involved was primarily testing of objective information. For informal assessment, their students journaled their understandings and participated in class discussions and debates. In Lange's chapter, he provides several ideas for meaningful assessment that extend beyond objective tests, such as involving students in authentic problems or asking them to critique information or defend their ideas.

Presented below are suggestions for developing a cultural theme on Cuba, based upon teacher and student input. The suggestions address some of the questions introduced at the outset of this writing. They also present evidence of bringing together cultures, cultural elements, and a variety of cultural resources, and they include assessment ideas.

### *Cuba*

- At the beginning of and throughout this cultural unit, teachers and students together should accomplish the following tasks: ascertain students' knowledge and interest on aspects of Cuba; use this

information to develop questions for inquiry; and create lists of possible resources to answer the questions and better understand Cuba (e.g., Internet, guest speakers, movies and documentaries).

- Teacher introduces students to one or two Cuban authors and/or poets. Students research the lives of the authors and discuss characteristics of their writings. As a group, students create the vocabulary list by selecting five vocabulary words daily that are necessary to understand the assigned readings. Students write a summary in English and also write five questions in Spanish for clarifying the literature.
- Students take a quiz in Spanish to demonstrate understanding of vocabulary, story or poetry content, objective information about Cuba (e.g., geography, government), information about the role of the Cuban government in the authors' lives (where applicable), and grammar topics reviewed or introduced through the literature.
- Subsequently, students watch an authentic Cuban film as a resource for discussing contemporary Cuban life and complete a film guide containing questions asking, "What do you think?" and "Why?"
- In groups, students make comparisons between the film and the literature, the fictitious elements of Cuba and real life, and the topic of and traditions around family, immigration, and/or death as viewed by Cubans, North Americans, and Mexicans (discussed in previous lessons with *The Day of the Dead*).

Examples of final performance assessment include the following:

- Groups of students develop and videotape a dramatization that presents similarities and differences between Cuban and North American cultures or that compares the different views of the role of the family, immigration, or death.
- Students obtain information (via interviews, letters, e-mail) from Cubans who have immigrated to the U.S., and they report on their experiences/feelings.
- Groups of students participate in a panel presentation and share viewpoints about the story or film.
- Students discuss current events or an historical event related to Cuba and include information on the United States' role in the event.

## **Conclusion**

By planning themes in small increments, teachers and students may honor the cultural knowledge and understandings that are brought to the classroom. FL teachers must remind students that although they, as teachers, have much experience with the language and pedagogy, their experience is not with every culture since cultures are always in flux. They should involve students in developing cultural themes of interest to them or that connect to

their other disciplines (e.g., language arts, social studies, art). If teachers plan for in-depth study of three new themes, after four years of FL study, students will have basic knowledge of 12 important themes. Imagine the connections that could be made among disciplines, between home and school, and among cultures. Imagine the global perspective students will truly begin to acquire rather than “the-magic-carpet-ride-to-another-culture syndrome” that pervades FL classrooms (Robinson, 1978). Change is necessary in how culture is approached, and it can be powerful for teachers and students.

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# Grammar Feedback Techniques to Promote Metacognitive Reflection in Student Writing

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Deborah Page  
Ruth Benander  
Teresa Roig-Torres  
University of Cincinnati

Foreign and second language instructors meet students at all levels of preparation for college work. Much of their work is with students with widely-varying proficiency in the languages of the class. At any level of language use, in all disciplines, at some point grammatical issues become important. In the research on language acquisition, debate continues over exactly how people learn to use the grammatical structures of a language according to some native speaker pattern. Helping students learn grammar is a basic task of the language teacher's profession because this language competency impacts the ability of the student to communicate effectively. The research in second language acquisition is currently neither clear nor encouraging about this aspect of language teaching, and language instructors might be interested in a revitalization of grammar teaching. Researchers in both second language acquisition (e.g., Ferris, 2002) and in the learning sciences (e.g., Zull, 2001; McKeough, Lupart, & Marini, 1995) suggest that having students actively reflect on their choices promotes learning. The current debate surrounding effective and ineffective grammar correction forces foreign language instructors to explore how they might adapt lessons in the light of these findings.

Ohio's Academic Content Standards for foreign languages state that a student leaving high school should be able to "interact using extended spoken, signed or written communication by providing and obtaining information" (Ohio Department of Education, 2003, pp.132-3). In addition, these standards require that a student "interact in a wide range of situations using culturally authentic language and gestures" (p. 46) as well as "apply age-appropriate writing process strategies to produce a variety of written documents for publication" (p. 37). All of these criteria imply that the student is able to use language creatively and accurately. In order to do this, a student must be able to make accurate inferences about his or her use of grammar and be able to self-edit during language production. Accuracy remains a strong concern to language instructors, and students must be able to recognize and identify grammatical errors in their own writing to achieve the Academic Content Standards' competencies.

In language acquisition research, debate continues over exactly how people learn to use the grammatical structures of a language according to the patterns of native speakers. Grammar is often de-emphasized in modern foreign language methodologies such as the Natural Approach (e.g., Krashen and Terrell, 1983), but it is often a prominent part of what is taught and corrected in the context of student writing. It is also one of the most challenging aspects of language learning. Facing this difficult situation, the authors will discuss two ways to approach grammar correction in student writing given the ideas that researchers in second language acquisition present.

### **Findings in the Literature**

A well known critic of grammar correction is Truscott (1996, 1999) who, in several reviews of the literature, concludes that grammar correction of any kind in student writing has no effect on student language learning. In an article in *Language Learning*, Truscott (1996) asserts that research shows grammar correction to be ineffective, that theory and practice show it to be ineffective, and that grammar correction can have harmful effects on language learning. Ashwell (2000), Magilow (1999), Löwen (1998), and Melin (1998) are examples from the mass of literature demonstrating that the manner of grammar correction or the type of grammar correction seems to have no effect on increased accuracy in the language students are learning. Yates and Kenkel (2002) point out that through explicit correction of student work, instructors may impose their own meanings on the students' work. Clearly, this body of literature does not advocate explicit grammar correction.

However, there are dissenters. Löwen (1998) does call attention to a study done by Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994) where students who were guided to learn self-correction did improve in being able to self-correct while reviewing their own writing. More recently, Ferris (1999, 2002) and Harklau (2002) suggest that to abandon grammar correction may not be the appropriate conclusion and that error correction, done in a supportive way, does not interfere with a student's interlanguage but becomes more input.

In larger classes, a student's written products are sometimes the most extensive and complex output a student will produce. The focused reflection afforded by writing can, for many students, create environments for reflective language learning. Therefore, one can consider grammar correction not as a means to short-term accuracy but as an additional source of input where repeated correction of the same structure may be necessary as part of natural learning.

### **Strategies and Principles for Grammar Correction**

What the research on language acquisition recommends is that a student needs to be fully engaged with the correction to have it make sense (Harklau, 2002). It is important to give grammar correction in a way that it

may be “comprehended input, or may be ‘used for the purpose of learning’ i.e., intake” (Gass, 1997, p. 25). The following is a discussion of two specific methods of reflective error correction for written work that utilize this model. In this way, grammar correction becomes comprehensible input in foreign and second language classes.

***From this research and practical considerations, two specific strategies recommended for improving students’ grammatical accuracy are a creative exercise (student personal writing) and a reflective exercise (group discussion or personal reflection on highlighted writing).***

The general principle these two strategies follow suggests that grammar instruction should include creative and reflective components in addition to explicit instruction. After the instructor has explained the grammar rules appropriate for the level of the class, students need to engage in creative language use and then reflection on that usage. Writing exercises are ideal for this kind of reflection because the usage is easier for everyone to examine and analyze. A tape recording of a conversation might be more difficult to share, although it is still a viable option for grammar reflection in a classroom setting. From this research and practical considerations, two specific strategies recommended for improving students’ grammatical accuracy are a creative exercise (student personal writing) and a reflective exercise (group discussion or personal reflection on highlighted writing).

There are many ways to structure exercises that encourage students to creatively produce language and then reflect on that usage after the presentation of new grammar rules. Whatever the method, it seems that grammar learning can be enhanced if learners have the opportunity to have an explicit lesson that explains the rules, have the opportunity to create language using those rules, and then reflect on the usage. In these reflections, students may initially focus on the application of the most recent grammar lesson; however, they may also focus on grammar issues covered in a previous lesson. It is clear that language learning is recursive, so if a group of students also works on other aspects of grammar, this tangent can be an important part of their grammar learning.

### ***Strategy 1: Error Correction as Conversation***

To produce a written sample, intermediate students, with some creative facility in the target language, write in class the first draft of an essay on an assigned topic. From each student’s essay, the instructor chooses example problem sentences and gives selected sentences to groups of students. The instructor may choose to group errors by type (e.g., subject-verb agreement, preposition usage, word order), or provide an exercise that encourages students to use their knowledge from previous grammar lessons to correct the errors

(e.g., students are given sentences where there are errors, but no specific direction with respect to the kind of error). As groups work, with minimal instructor input, the students try to figure out different ways to reword the sentences to be more correct. In this strategy, the grammar correction comes from the students; it is a source of input for verbal and written language production. It is comfortable for students because the errors are anonymous, and it is personal because every student has contributed at least one of the sentences being studied. In addition, it is meaning-based error correction rather than the instructor imposing her own meaning on the sentence. At the end of the group work period, the instructor reviews the exercise with the class to assure correctness.

### ***Strategy 2: Revision as personal rule reflection***

Another strategy begins by having students at any level write a first draft in class with the use of reference materials, such as their textbook or a dictionary, for help. Students take that writing home and revise it on their own. This can also be done in a following class period if students appear to have someone at home correcting their essays. The second draft (i.e., the revision) is handed in to the instructor. The instructor indicates the sentences, parts of sentences, or words that are inaccurate. This marking can be done with a highlighter, or for lower level students who may need extra guidance, with abbreviations that indicate the type of error (e.g., case, tense, or gender), but the instructor does not give the correction. The students revise their writing again, perhaps with help in group work, and then resubmit that third draft for grading. The instructor corrects the final piece of writing with corrections of what the students either missed or did not understand and assigns a grade.

## **Conclusion**

In order to engage the student in the grammar correction, it is helpful, as Aljaafreh and Lantolf have noted (1994), to guide the student to make better self-correction. An instructor can spend a great deal of time poring over student essays and meticulously correcting grammar. However, Ferris and Roberts (2001) show “there were no significant differences in editing success between the group that received coded feedback and the group that simply had errors underlined” (p. 176). Students may be copying the instructor-provided corrections to hand in more accurate essays, but they may not have learned how to use the language more accurately from copying the corrections.

This recommendation of using the revision process for reflection on grammar significantly decreases the amount of work for the instructor and increases the amount of work for the student. More significantly, this process increases student engagement in language acquisition and the writing process. Therefore, it is important to schedule these pieces of writing in ways that work well with the demands of other coursework. The hardest part of this method

may be for the instructor to wait patiently as students work through their errors, making more errors until they finally understand the structures. Instructors also need to accept that improved writing skills may take longer for students to achieve than the course in which they are enrolled. An instructor can not expect immediate changes from error correction; however, the input instructors give in a course may have an effect later. An instructor will help students more by pointing out the error so the students can deal with it actively, as it is not as effective for the instructor simply to write in a correction. Pointing out the error can be done through highlighting the problem area or using symbols to indicate the type of error the student has made, such as an error of tense, case, or gender. The instructor can also use student writing for group work to encourage active discussion of grammar. In whatever way the instructor chooses to ask students to actively reflect on their own grammar, research and the authors' experience indicate that instructors can make grammar correction an engaging and productive learning experience for students.

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# Documenting and Improving Student Learning Through the LinguaFolio

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**Aleidine J. Moeller**

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

**Vickie Scow**

Nebraska Department of Education

**Jacque Bott Van Houten**

Kentucky Department of Education

Imagine a language portfolio that provides a context for students and teachers to document and analyze learning progress. Students set learning goals, review and reflect on these goals regularly, and track their own learning to self-assess their progress. Teachers review the portfolio, measure student achievement, and plan curriculum to meet the needs of their students. How can such a portfolio be integrated into the classroom? What are the benefits of using a portfolio? This article addresses these two questions and describes the Nebraska and Kentucky LinguaFolio project aimed at improving student achievement and teacher quality through the integration of a portfolio into the language classroom.

The European Language Portfolio served as the model for the LinguaFolio projects. Initiated in 2001 during the European Year of Language, the European Language Portfolio (ELP) is a three-part document over which students have ownership from the earliest days of language learning to the workplace. The Language Biography, Passport, and Dossier serve respectively to: detail and validate a learner's language background, intercultural activities and language goals; provide an overview of the learner's language proficiency and cultural activities and record any official documents (certificates/diplomas, etc.); and provide evidence of the learner's progress (work samples, tutor's reports, etc.). Recognized by European ministries of education, businesses, and language schools such as the Goethe and Cervantes Institutes and the Alliance Française, the ELP is being used to a varied extent in all 41 nations of the Council of Europe. It is a powerful tool for three important reasons: (1) it helps develop reflective and autonomous learners; (2) it demonstrates the value of multi-purpose language learning, heritage languages, and interculturality; and (3) its self-assessment grid, based on the European Common Frame of Reference (Council of Europe, 2001), provides a common criteria for evaluating competency.

The National Council of State Supervisors for Languages (NCSSFL) has taken the lead in promoting an American version of the ELP, called the *LinguaFolio USA*, as its 2005 The Year of Languages project. This article will focus on the work of two states' Departments of Education, Nebraska and Kentucky, in collaboration with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, that brought together a wide range of stakeholders to design and pilot versions for grades 3-16.

*LinguaFolio Nebraska*, for high school and university students, and *LinguaFolio Kentucky*, for young learners, were introduced in selected schools last year as part of a pilot project to research the impact a language portfolio has on improving second language learning. The two states have gathered feedback from teachers and students who participated in the pilot projects. Based on that feedback, the *LinguaFolio Nebraska* and *LinguaFolio Kentucky* were revised as more teachers implemented the language portfolio into their classroom curriculum. Nebraska is collecting data for secondary students and Kentucky for elementary students beginning in 2004-2005 and continuing through 2008-2009.

### **LinguaFolio Nebraska**

The *LinguaFolio Nebraska* (Nebraska Department of Education, n.d., *LinguaFolio*) <http://www.nde.state.ne.us/FORLG/PreK16.htm>) is designed to enhance students' reflection and analysis of their own learning in grades 7-12 through a language journal, a series of checklists identifying language knowledge, skills, cultural understanding, and proficiency levels. A dossier of evidence, consisting of a collection of examples of the student's best work, constitutes a salient part of each individual's portfolio.

This project focuses on the portfolio as a venue to promote self-assessment, to involve students in their own learning, and to propel them towards academic success. According to Williams and Burden, (1997) there is a need for teachers "to encourage learners to talk about their aims and set goals for themselves regarding learning the language, to help them make choices and to encourage a sense of responsibility for (their) actions" (p. 205). Just as teachers must work with specific objectives in mind when planning lessons, students can better meet their objectives when they have a framework to use to guide their work. Effective teachers train their students to evaluate their work themselves, to track their own learning progress, thus teaching them the valuable lesson that "personal change (is) continuous, lifelong and within one's own power" (Williams & Burden, 1997, p. 76).

The *LinguaFolio Nebraska Teacher Guide* (Theiler, 2004) serves as a point of reference from which the teacher can develop an implementation plan tailored for his or her students. At the beginning of the first semester, teachers discuss the *LinguaFolio*, its purpose, and complete the My Language Journey section. The purpose of this section is to help students understand their own language and culture experiences as well as explore learning strategies designed

to improve achievement.

Approximately eight weeks into the first semester, teachers will assist students to better understand language proficiency in the language by introducing the levels of language competency (novice, intermediate, advanced) and communication forms (interpretive, interpersonal, presentational) using the Self Assessment of Competency Level rubric (Appendix C). Under the guidance of the teacher, students can identify their own level of competency, explore the progression of language learning from beginning to expanding levels, and identify their language level at present and set goals for where they want to be. The Self-Assessment Checklist (Appendix B) provides the catalyst from which students can track their own learning by allowing students to specifically assess where they are on a scale of 1 to 100. Students will revisit the checklist at the end of each year of language study and analyze their learning progress.

Increasing student involvement in the assessment process results in increased learning (Black & William, 1998). Central is a set of three questions every learner asks and answers regularly: Where am I trying to go? Where am I now relative to that target? What specific action do I need to take to close the gap (Sadler 1989; Atkin, Black, & Coffey 2001)? Stiggins (1997) notes, “If we start with no focus, no story to tell, no purpose, no clear achievement targets, we end up with useless and unmanageable portfolios” (p. 473). The LinguaFolio Nebraska provides the structure and self-assessment tools and also identifies the levels of language proficiency students should aim for during their language-learning journey.

The Dossier of Evidence assists students in understanding their language growth through the creation of goals, collection of evidence representing achievement of goals, and reflections regarding the learning experience. The Dossier has two cycles beginning with the teacher-driven cycle and progressing through the student-driven cycle. The teacher-driven cycle (Appendix D) is integral in providing evidence representing student growth. The student-driven cycle (Appendix E) is critical to the success of the LinguaFolio as it provides evidence of goal writing, collection of data, and reflections on the attainment of goals and progress of language learning by and for the language learner. Based on the results of the pilot study, writing goals and reflections are difficult tasks for students, and the process requires structured and continual guidance from teachers. Student guides for setting goals and writing self-reflections are included in the Teacher Guide available at <http://www.nde.state.ne.us/FORLG/PreK16.htm>.

### **LinguaFolio Kentucky**

While the emphasis in Nebraska has been on students in grades 9 through 12, LinguaFolio Kentucky (Kentucky Department of Education, n.d., *LinguaFolio*) is focusing on getting early language learners in elementary school to value language and culture, understand their language learning

process, and set personal language learning goals. The Language Biography serves as the primary vehicle for building this attitude of cultural recognition and respect and learner autonomy. It is further supported by the dossier of collected work samples and the passport's official record.

Traditional high school world language programs are more the norm in Kentucky than FLES programs, but a legislative grant to fund 10 start-up elementary school arts and foreign language programs and a desire to promote early language learning shifted the interest in piloting the LinguaFolio Kentucky to young learners. In a pre-study, teachers in these schools were asked to use the self-assessment with their students and to make simple observations and answer basic questions about the preliminary design and implementation of the tool. Kentucky's LinguaFolio is based on the European Language Portfolio and modeled after British and German models. A team of Kentucky P-12 educators developed the competency levels, which are aligned to the Kentucky Content for World Language Proficiency, the European Global Scale of Common Reference, ACTFL performance guidelines (American Council, 1998), and the junior oral proficiency interviews (Center for Applied Linguistics, ELLOPA, 2000-01).

The intention of Kentucky's early language learner self-assessment is to build a foundation for future learner autonomy. According to van Krayenoord and Paris (1997), student self-assessment is fundamental to the development of intrinsic motivation and autonomous learning. Teaching students to acknowledge and take pride in their linguistic and cultural heritage, as well as intercultural activities, is an important first step.

***Helping students understand that their background and experiences play a role in their individual learning process prepares them for the next step in developing learner autonomy—understanding how they learn in the classroom.***

The Language Biography asks students what language(s) are spoken at home, if and where they have heard other languages spoken, when and how they have interacted with people from other cultures or who speak other languages, and what cultural experiences they have had. Besides validating the often-undervalued heritage speakers' background, using the Language Biography encourages students to recognize their international experiences in small ways that acknowledge the global pattern woven into our everyday lives. Third and fourth grade students in the pre-study noted things like seeing children's books written in Spanish at the public library, hearing their neighbors speak Korean, and participating in a family ceremony where Hebrew was spoken. Recognizing interculturality on a continual basis plants the seeds and nurtures the growth of attitudinal changes that can positively affect how people view

language learning in this country.

Helping students understand that their background and experiences play a role in their individual learning process prepares them for the next step in developing learner autonomy—understanding how they learn in the classroom. In the *LinguaFolio*, students are asked to circle or check what they *can do* in the language, as well as to reflect on what helps them speak, understand, read, and write. The first demand is motivational in that it sets students on a path of positive thinking about their accomplishments. It also provides a clear statement of expectations and gives students the information needed to set learning goals. Students who “can say what color something is” and “can sing a song” will be able to surmise that their next goal might be to say the date or read a simple story (Kentucky Department of Education, n.d., *LinguaFolio*). The second demand asks students to reflect on how they learn by responding to questions like: What helps me understand when I read words in another language? What activities help me pronounce words like my teacher says them? My favorite activities for learning new words and phrases are... (Appendix A). Initially, students, particularly younger ones, will need a good deal of help thinking about possible answers, but purposeful and continuous reflection on the learning process encourages a much higher-order thinking skill and suggests long term effects on learner autonomy.

For the dossier all students are asked to choose samples of their work that show what they know or can do and that demonstrate progress. Kentucky students are already familiar with this concept, as a writing portfolio is part of the statewide assessment. In time, keeping such evidence will support what the students are discovering about their learning process and, as Hill (1995) suggests, engage them in reflecting how well they have achieved the standards and criteria set out for them.

Learning to self-assess and reflect on one’s work takes time for young learners, particularly because of its relationship to the development of metacognitive abilities (McAlpine, 2000). How much time to devote to the *LinguaFolio*’s implementation was a concern of the pre-study. Teachers received background information on the *LinguaFolio* but were intentionally not provided directions for implementing it with their students in order to see what different approaches they might take and how much time they might take for its implementation. Consequently, the amount of time spent on using the self-assessment with students varied greatly. Teachers generally agreed that the Language Biography should be formally addressed three times during the first year, twice in successive years, with periodic references to sections on learning strategies and goals, providing students additional opportunities to think about their learning on their own. In their report on a European study, Little and Perclová (2002) report that when asked how often they should explicitly devote time to the pedagogical functions of the European Language Portfolio (ELP), teachers answered, “As often as possible.”

McAlpine (2000) believes that not only can children as early as five be taught to improve their self-assessment skills, but that they often take it more

seriously than older students. Using the *LinguaFolio* with young students to explore and appreciate their international connectedness and reflect on their learning process will build a generation of learners who value language, who find language learning transparent, and who are responsible for their own learning.

### **The Role of Professional Development**

According to Kent (2004), “professional development is the catalyst to transforming theory into current best teaching practices” (p. 427). Teachers must be given formal training regarding portfolio implementation followed by opportunities to communicate with other teachers regarding successes and challenges as well as follow-up support for ongoing teacher learning (Darling-Hammond & Falk, 1997). For this reason an immersion Spanish institute was held in Nebraska in June, 2004, to immerse teachers in the Spanish language while modeling research-based instructional strategies and curricula that enhanced language achievement in the classroom. These 25 teachers were informed how to use the *LinguaFolio* as an assessment tool and how to increase self-regulation of student learning. Pearson (2001) notes, “We need to remind ourselves of the absolutely essential role played by professional development. We would go so far as to say that the professional development surrounding new assessment tools is far more important than the tools themselves” (p. 182). If educators are not informed how to use an instrument or are isolated in the implementation of an assessment tool, the likelihood of a positive effect on student achievement is limited. The production of quality instructors requires that they receive quality preparation.

While many Nebraska foreign language teachers have been trained in developing a standards-based curriculum and creating standards-based instructional strategies through the Nebraska K-12 Foreign Language Frameworks project, they have not been given the time or resources to address the following question: What impact does my foreign language instruction have on second language proficiency and how can I measure student language progress?

As students progress through the school year, the *LinguaFolio* Nebraska allows students to document their foreign language experiences and progress and record levels of language proficiency reached according to the adapted ACTFL oral proficiency guidelines (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, 1986). Examples of self-selected student work in the second language are another important source of evidence of student learning. This portfolio will provide the information necessary for the language educator to be able to determine the needs of the students and therefore to adjust instruction as needed. The portfolio also provides teachers and parents with a snapshot of the student’s second language proficiency from Pre-K through college. More importantly, the student will become more conscious of the progression of his or her proficiency and be able to track improvement of

skills. In addition to these assessments, a teacher-independent assessment will also be administered that is performance-based in the areas of reading, writing, and speaking.

Follow-up activities will consist of online discussions via Blackboard, meetings at the Nebraska International Language Association (NILA) fall conference, and through electronic mailing lists. Funding will be sought to expand this project to another cohort of 25 the following two years in order to build a critical mass of foreign language teachers who can serve as turnkey trainers for their foreign language colleagues in their respective school districts. This multiplier effect will build a network and community of language teachers who understand formative and summative assessment of performance-based learning and who have access to language skill development to increase their language competency.

Building a critical mass of teachers who are competent Spanish speakers and who understand pedagogy and how to use formative and summative assessment in Spanish language classrooms will increase language achievement and proficiency among language learners.

### **Project Evaluation**

The objectives of these projects align with both the national standards for foreign language learning (National Standards, 1999) and the Nebraska (Nebraska, 1996) and Kentucky K-12 Foreign Language Frameworks (Kentucky, 2000) and promote systemic approaches to improving foreign language learning. An assessment of student language proficiency gains will be conducted using pre- and post-oral proficiency measures as well as analysis of documents offered as evidence in the student portfolio. A distribution of learners (high, mid, low) will be selected and followed to determine language gains in reading, writing and speaking. Teacher participants will keep a journal relating experiences in their efforts to improve their own language proficiency and that of their students. These will be recorded via Blackboard in private folders accessible only to individual teacher participants and the instructor. These are automatically archived and will provide a rich database for research related to student learning. A focus group and individual interviews will be conducted, transcribed, and analyzed. These quantitative and qualitative measures will provide insights and understanding about how language proficiency can be enhanced among students and teachers alike. An expansion of this project to other schools and school districts will provide valuable longitudinal data that will help foreign language educators to understand how language is learned in classrooms and how to measure that learning in ways that improve instruction and increase student learning.

### **Conclusion**

The LinguaFolio can serve as an assessment for students and teachers in significant ways and for several purposes. Throughout the process of utilizing

portfolios, students continually self-evaluate in order to monitor performance and to self-assess goal progress. This builds effective learners who become active in the management of their own learning and who become independent learners with the ability to self-regulate. Students are not only offered the opportunity to assess their general learning and growth, but they are also offered the opportunity to assess particular components of learning, such as goal setting. Through the process of goal setting, students become aware of the connection between effort and success and can internalize the importance of effort for the achievement of success. In the LinguaFolio project, teachers are taught how to assist and guide students in setting appropriate goals. Teachers extensively model and practice the process of goal writing with students and provide carefully scaffolded practice in self-evaluation to reduce the cognitive load of such processes. Students self-evaluate and gather evidence of whether or not they are meeting their goals. According to McDonald and Boud (2003), "Self-assessment training had a significant impact on the performance of those who had been exposed to it. On average, students with self-assessment training outperformed their peers who had been exposed to teaching without such training in all curriculum areas" (p. 217).

In addition to students, the LinguaFolio is useful for teachers, parents, schools, and colleges. Teachers are able to utilize the portfolios to assess the effect of instruction on student learning. Parents may choose to utilize portfolios in order to assess their child's progress and identify strengths and weaknesses. Schools and colleges may choose to use portfolios to place students in language classrooms that promote a smooth articulation from one level of schooling to the next.

Portfolios offer a powerful venue to increase self-assessment skills, develop self-regulation, and ultimately improve achievement. This project intends to follow language learners for the next five years to determine what students know and are able to do in K-12 classrooms after one, two, three, four, and five years of language instruction. Valuable data collected will help determine if actively involving students in setting learning goals, reflecting on these goals, and tracking their own learning has an impact on their language learning progress.

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APPENDIX A

# My Language Biography

Page 5

**What helps me understand when I READ words in another language?**

look for word  
that are in spanish  
that like there  
spelled in english

**What helps me understand when I HEAR words in another language?**

When words  
sound like  
english words

**What activities help me PRONOUNCE words like my teacher says them?**

repeating words

**What helps me COMMUNICATE my ideas to people when I speak?**

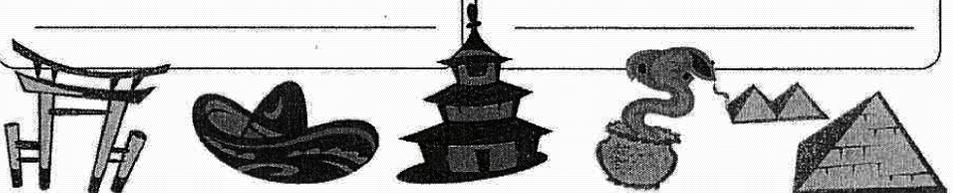
Think of  
words that  
I have learned  
in class.

**What helps me communicate my ideas when you WRITE?**

I saw the words

**What GOALS do I have for learning a language?**

Communicate  
with other  
people



**APPENDIX B**

**Self-Assessment Checklist**

Indicate your level of language ability on the scale of 0–10–20–30–40–50–60–70–80–90–100, with 0 meaning no ability and 100 meaning very high ability (near native speaker).

<b>LISTENING</b>		Date	Date
<b>NOVICE</b> Beginning 1	I can understand when someone speaks very slowly and carefully to me, if I have time to think. 0 - - - - - 100		
	I can understand carefully phrased questions and instructions and I can follow short simple directions. 0 - - - - - 100		
	I can understand numbers, prices and times. 0 - - - - - 100		
<b>NOVICE</b> Beginning 2	I can understand what is said clearly, slowly and directly to me in simple everyday conversation with persons accustomed to non-native speakers. 0 - - - - - 100		
	I can catch the main point in short, clear, simple messages and announcements. 0 - - - - - 100		
	I can understand the essential information in short recorded passages dealing with predictable everyday matters, which are spoken slowly and clearly. 0 - - 100		
<b>INTERMEDIATE</b> Developing 1	I can follow clear everyday conversation, though I sometimes have to ask for repetition. 0 - - - - - 100		
	I can listen to a short narrative and form hypotheses about what will happen next. 0 - - - - - 100		
	I can understand the main points of radio news bulletins and TV programs and simpler recorded material on topics of personal interest when the delivery is relatively slow and clear. 0 - - - - - 100		
<b>INTERMEDIATE</b> Developing 2	I can understand in detail what is said to me in standard spoken language. 0 - 100		
	I can understand the main ideas of complex speech on both concrete and abstract topics delivered in a standard dialect. 0 - - - - - 100		
	I can use a variety of strategies to achieve comprehension, including listening for main points, checking comprehension by using contextual clues. 0 - - - - - 100		
<b>ADVANCED</b> Expanding 1	I can follow extended, informal speech. 0 - - - - - 100		
	I can understand idiomatic expressions and slang. 0 - - - - - 100		
	I can understand information from public announcements, e.g. at a sports event, in the airport. 0 - - - - - 100		
	I can understand complex, technical information, e.g. product information and operating instructions. 0 - - - - - 100		
<b>ADVANCED</b> Expanding 2	I can understand films, which contain idiomatic usage and slang. 0 - - - - - 100		
	I have no difficulty in understanding any kind of spoken language, whether live or broadcast, even when delivered at fast native speed, provided I have some time to get familiar with the accent. 0 - - - - - 100		

**APPENDIX B**

**Self-Assessment Checklist**

Indicate your level of language ability on the scale of 0–10–20–30–40–50–60–70–80–90–100, with 0 meaning no ability and 100 meaning very high ability (near native speaker).

<b>LISTENING</b>		Date	Date
<b>NOVICE</b> Beginning 1	I can understand when someone speaks very slowly and carefully to me, if I have time to think. 0 - - - - - 100		
	I can understand carefully phrased questions and instructions and I can follow short simple directions. 0 - - - - - 100		
	I can understand numbers, prices and times. 0 - - - - - 100		
<b>NOVICE</b> Beginning 2	I can understand what is said clearly, slowly and directly to me in simple everyday conversation with persons accustomed to non-native speakers. 0 - - - - - 100		
	I can catch the main point in short, clear, simple messages and announcements. 0 - - - - - 100		
	I can understand the essential information in short recorded passages dealing with predictable everyday matters, which are spoken slowly and clearly. 0 - - 100		
<b>INTERMEDIATE</b> Developing 1	I can follow clear everyday conversation, though I sometimes have to ask for repetition. 0 - - - - - 100		
	I can listen to a short narrative and form hypotheses about what will happen next. 0 - - - - - 100		
	I can understand the main points of radio news bulletins and TV programs and simpler recorded material on topics of personal interest when the delivery is relatively slow and clear. 0 - - - - - 100		
<b>INTERMEDIATE</b> Developing 2	I can understand in detail what is said to me in standard spoken language. 0 - 100		
	I can understand the main ideas of complex speech on both concrete and abstract topics delivered in a standard dialect. 0 - - - - - 100		
	I can use a variety of strategies to achieve comprehension, including listening for main points, checking comprehension by using contextual clues. 0 - - - - - 100		
<b>ADVANCED</b> Expanding 1	I can follow extended, informal speech. 0 - - - - - 100		
	I can understand idiomatic expressions and slang. 0 - - - - - 100		
	I can understand information from public announcements, e.g. at a sports event, in the airport. 0 - - - - - 100		
	I can understand complex, technical information, e.g. product information and operating instructions. 0 - - - - - 100		
	I can understand films, which contain idiomatic usage and slang. 0 - - - - - 100		
<b>ADVANCED</b> Expanding 2	I have no difficulty in understanding any kind of spoken language, whether live or broadcast, even when delivered at fast native speed, provided I have some time to get familiar with the accent. 0 - - - - - 100		

Appendix C

**Self Assessment of Competency Level**

		NOVICE		INTERMEDIATE
		Beginning 1	Beginning 2	Developing 1
<b>INTERPRETIVE</b>	<b>Listening</b>	I can understand familiar words and very basic phrases concerning myself, my family and immediate surroundings when people speak slowly and clearly	I can understand phrases and the commonly used vocabulary related to areas of personal relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local area, employment). I can catch the main point in short, clear, simple messages and announcements.	I can understand main points in a conversation on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. I can understand the main point of many radio or TV programs on current affairs or topics of interest when the delivery is relatively slow and clear.
	<b>Reading</b>	I can understand familiar names, words, and very simple sentences, for example on notes, posters or in catalogs.	I can read very short, simple texts. I can find specific, predictable information in simple everyday material such as advertisements, menus, and schedules and I can understand short simple personal letters.	I can understand texts that consist mainly of everyday or job-related language. I can understand the description of events, feelings and wishes in personal letters.
<b>INTERPERSONAL</b>	<b>Speaking (Interaction)</b>	I can interact in a simple way provided the other person is prepared to repeat or rephrase things at a slower rate of speech and help me formulate what I am trying to say. I can ask and answer simple questions in areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics	I can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar topics and activities. I can handle very short social exchanges, even though I cannot usually understand enough to keep the conversation going myself.	I can deal with most situations likely to arise when traveling in an area where the language is spoken. I can enter unprepared into conversation on topics that are familiar. Of personal interest or pertinent to everyday life (e.g. family hobbies, work, travel and current events).
	<b>Speaking (Production)</b>	I can use simple phrases and sentences to describe where I live and people I know	I can use a series of phrases and sentences to describe in simple terms my family and other people, living conditions, my educational background and my present or most recent job.	I can connect phrases in a simple way in order to describe experiences and events, my dreams, hopes and ambitions. I can briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans. I can narrate a story or relate the plot of a book or film and describe my reactions.
<b>PRESENTATIONAL</b>	<b>Writing</b>	I can write a short, simple postcard, for example sending holiday greetings. I can fill in forms with personal details, for example entering my name, nationality and address on a hotel registration form.	I can write short, simple notes and messages. I can write a very simple personal letter, for example thanking someone for something.	I can write simple connected text on topics, which are familiar, or of personal interest. I can write personal letters describing experiences and impressions.

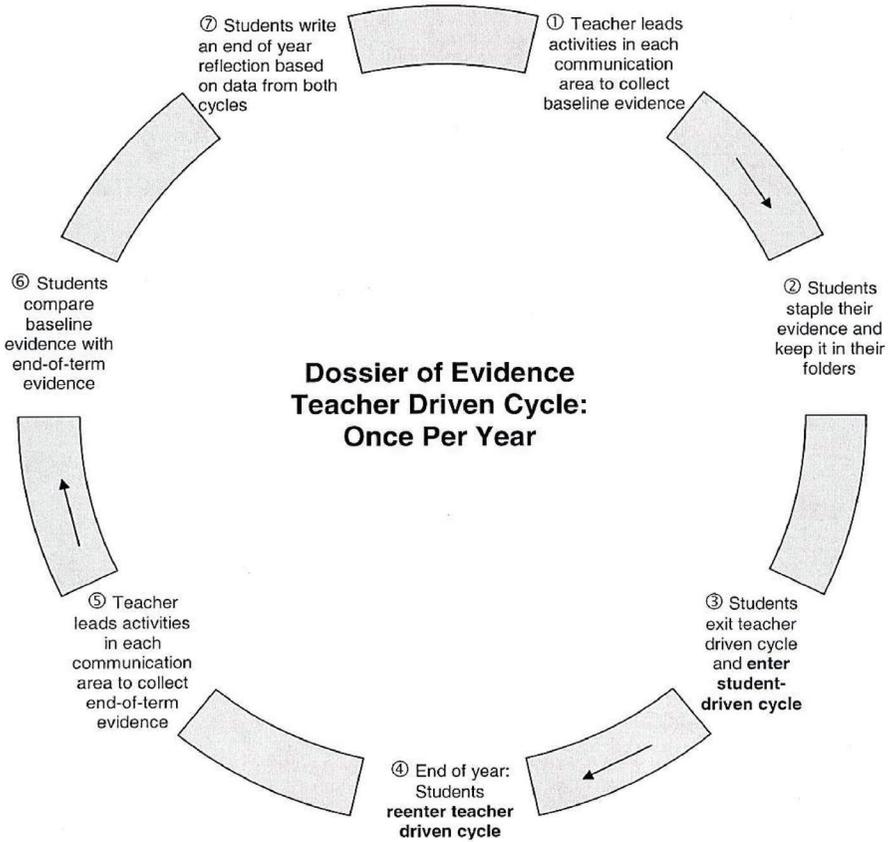
Appendix C

Self Assessment of Competency Level

		INTERMEDIATE		ADVANCED			
		Developing 2		Expanding 1		Expanding 2	
<b>INTERPRETIVE</b>	Listening	I can understand extended speech and lectures and follow even complex lines of argument provided the topic is reasonably familiar. I can understand most TV news and current affairs programs. I can understand the majority of films in standard language.		I can understand extended speech even when it is not clearly structured and when relationships are only implied and not signaled explicitly. I can understand television programs and films without too much effort.		I have no difficulty in understanding any kind of spoken language, whether live or broadcast, even when delivered at fast native speed, provided I have some time to get familiar with the accent.	
	Reading	I can read articles and reports concerned with contemporary problems in which the writers adopt particular attitudes or viewpoints. I can understand contemporary literary prose.		I can understand long and complex factual and literary texts, appreciating distinctions of style. I can understand specialized articles and longer technical instructions, even when they do not relate to my field.		I can read with ease virtually all forms of the written languages, including abstract, structurally or linguistically complex texts such as manuals, specialized articles and literary works.	
<b>INTERPERSONAL</b>	Speaking (Interaction)	I can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible. I can take an active part in discussion in familiar contexts, and support my views.		I can express myself fluently and spontaneously without obviously searching for expressions. I can use language flexibly and effectively for social and professional purposes. I can formulate ideas and opinions with precision and relate my contribution skillfully to those of other speakers.		I can take part effortlessly in any conversation or discussion and have a good familiarity with idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms. I can express myself fluently and convey finer shades of meaning precisely. If I have a problem I can backtrack and restructure around the difficulty so smoothly that other people are hardly aware of it.	
	Speaking (Production)	I can present clear, detailed descriptions on a wide range of subjects. I can explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.		I can present clear, detailed descriptions of complex subjects integrating sub-themes, developing particular points and formulating an appropriate conclusion.		I can present a clear, smoothly flowing description or argument in a style appropriate to the context with an effective logical structure which helps the recipient notice and remember significant points.	
<b>PRESENTATIONAL</b>	Writing	I can write clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects related to my interests. I can write an essay or report that conveys information or gives reasons in support of or against a particular point of view. I can write letters highlighting the personal significance of events and experiences.		I can express myself in clear, well-structured text, expressing points of view at some length. I can write about complex subjects in a letter, an essay or a report, underlining what I consider to be the key issues. I can select a style appropriate to the reader in mind.		I can write clear, smoothly flowing text in an appropriate style. I can write complex letters, reports or articles that present a case with an effective logical structure, which helps the recipient notice and remember significant points. I can write summaries and reviews of professional or literary works.	

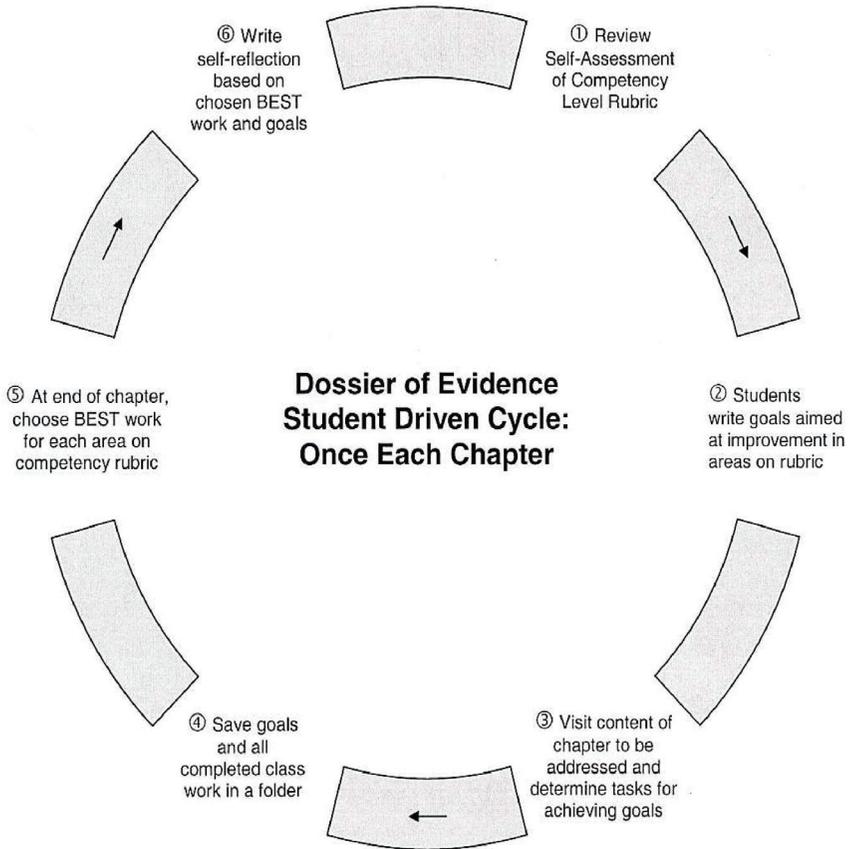
Appendix D

Nebraska LinguaFolio Dossier of Evidence: Graphic # 1



Appendix E

Nebraska LinguaFolio Dossier of Evidence: Graphic # 2





# Learning to Participate, Communicate, and Cooperate in the Language Classroom

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**Tatiana Sildus**  
Pittsburg State University

## What is Cooperative Learning?

The instructional strategy known as cooperative learning has been around for several decades and continues to gain popularity among teachers of different subject areas and age levels in this country and all over the world. Although there are some differences in approaches to cooperative learning theory, its major contributors (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1994; Slavin, 1982; Kagan, 1994; Sharan & Sharan, 1992) have identified several common attributes of cooperative learning: heterogeneous grouping and peer support, student-student interaction, group goals, and equal opportunities to be successful. Thus, the traditional roles of teachers and students undergo a transformation in a cooperative learning classroom: instead of being the central figure, the teacher becomes a coach, while the students take responsibility for their learning and are given opportunities to assist others (Hall, 2000; Rodgers, 2001).

The terminology can be confusing at times, as many educators use the terms “collaborative learning” and “cooperative learning” interchangeably (Oxford, 1997; Tinzmann et al., 1990). Moreover, some educators not familiar with the approach assume that cooperative learning is the same as traditional group work. In a cooperative learning classroom, students are usually divided into small heterogeneous groups of four to five students, with four being the ideal number. However, the creation of groups is not enough. What makes cooperative learning unique and separates cooperative learning from group work is its basic principles (Kagan & High, 2002; Oxford, 1997).

Cooperative learning refers to a set of carefully designed and structured instructional techniques based on the following four principles, with the acronym PIES (Kagan, 1994):

**P** = Positive Interdependence (Is a gain for one a gain for all?)

**I** = Individual Accountability (Is individual public performance required?)

**E** = Equal Participation (How equally is the work distributed among the team members?)

**S** = Simultaneous Interaction (How many students in a classroom are actively engaged at any one moment?)

## **Cooperative Learning, Communicative Language Teaching, and Foreign Language Standards**

The influence of what became known as a communicative curricular approach to language teaching has been so considerable that it has been called a major paradigm shift (Jacobs & Farrell, 2001). This change is also reflected in *Standards for Foreign Language Learning* (National Standards, 1996) where the importance of communication is highlighted.

Cooperative learning is based on the same principles as communicative language teaching, and the former is often considered a spin-off approach of the latter (Rodgers, 2001). Researchers agree that cooperative learning is particularly beneficial for the field of second language acquisition. It is a valuable option for implementing communicative language teaching because of its social nature and potential to increase meaningful student-student interaction (Jacobs & Farrell, 2001). As a result, a greater degree of comprehensible input and language production can be achieved in the supportive environment where peers are motivated to negotiate meaning, speak, and listen for understanding (Kagan & High, 2002). According to Oxford (1997), these behaviors are “essential in normal human communication” (p. 446) and certainly deserve language teachers’ attention.

Another reason to take a closer look at cooperative learning is its potential to create a “frame” for various standards-based activities (Kagan, Kagan, and Kagan, 2000). Communication in more than one mode is already called for by most of the structures themselves (McGroarty, 1993); the teacher will just have to “infuse” them with culturally relevant, intellectually challenging content. The accountability factor and less formal atmosphere may encourage students to fully participate in a learning community of their peers (Hall, 2000).

The major advantage of Kagan’s approach to cooperative learning is the fact that it is not lesson-based. On the contrary, its content-free structures are different from activities (Oxford, 1997) and therefore can be included in any lesson at any point (Kagan & High, 2002), thus making them relatively easy to learn and implement.

### **Things to Keep in Mind**

In order to make cooperative learning work in the classroom, teachers should keep in mind that:

***Instructions are important.*** They should be very simple and sequential and should address one specific part of the activity at a time. Teachers should allow students enough time to learn a specific cooperative learning structure. The extra time spent learning the structure will actually save time for future activities. It is a good idea to check for understanding and ask students what the next step of the activity is going to be when learning a new structure.

**Timing is crucial.** The teacher should specify how much time is allowed for each part of the activity before it begins, let the students know when the timing starts, and use a quiet signal to indicate when the time is up. A timer, a bell, or a rain stick can work well, and teachers can experiment and find out what works best for their classrooms.

**Structures are not activities.** They are a way of organizing content and can be used repeatedly with different content. They become activities when the content is added. The basic formula is Structure + Content = Activity (High, 1993).

### Examples from the Language Classroom

The following examples demonstrate how to combine language learning content from different language levels with cooperative learning structures.

#### ***Structure: Inside-Outside Circle'***

Sample content: Basic greeting words, introductions.

Strengths: This structure is especially suitable for classrooms with large numbers of students and with the content that especially requires multiple repetitions. It allows 50% of the students to be involved in language production simultaneously without the boredom of a drill.

Directions: Divide students in two groups (by the rows, for example). One half of the students form a circle facing outward. The other half of the students form the outside circle by facing students in the inside circle. After rehearsing the greetings with the first partner, the teacher tells the students whether the inside or the outside circle rotates and in which direction to form new pairs. The language practice is expanded when the teacher gives different directions after each rotation. For example, the students in the outside circle are instructed to ask their partners about their age, then the students in the inside circle may have to ask their partners about their hobbies and interests or family members. Thus, the students have multiple opportunities to interact and make personally relevant connections.

Suggestion: Use a signal (a bell) at the end of the allotted time interval so the students keep moving, especially in large classrooms or in classrooms with younger students.

Additional content: For more advanced students, the structure could be used to exchange phone numbers and addresses and plans for the weekend or opinions about sports or movies.

***Structure: Numbered Heads Together***

Sample content: Telling time.

Strengths: It encourages all students to think and be accountable. As a result, even students who would never volunteer to speak up in a traditional classroom participate in a meaningful small team discussion.

Directions: For this structure, the students will need to be divided into heterogeneous teams.<sup>2</sup> Have students number off within each team and also assign a team number to each team. Use a model clock and ask the class in the target language what time it is. Tell the students to make sure everybody knows the answer. Pose a question or discussion topic to the groups and first provide silent thinking time. After the thinking time is up, use a signal to start the discussion with, for example, person number one on each team. The rest of the teammates take turns to share and discuss their answers. At this time, students whose answers were incorrect can get help from teammates. Signal the end of the discussion and randomly call on students to report an answer for their group, for example, person number two on team number five.

Suggestions: To ensure that all teams are actively involved after a question is asked, it is important to maintain the calling sequence starting with the person number followed by the team number. A randomly selected individual student or a team of students can also be involved in acting as teachers and preparing and asking their own questions. In addition, spinners can be used for random selection of students.

Additional content: For more advanced students, finishing a short story based on a comic picture from the target country will allow students to show their creativity while engaging thinking skills.

***Structure: Round Robin***

Sample content: Food items.

Strengths: This structure is great for reviewing information that is categorical in nature and when classroom time is limited.

Directions: Students work in teams taking turns contributing one item per person to the group answer until the category is exhausted or the time runs out. For example, the teacher may choose to have students name all food items they know in the target language. Another option is to instruct students to mention all food items with one reason why the item is healthy or unhealthy, or create other categories for food items such as fruits and vegetables, or separate foods by color if it is a second review.

**Suggestion:** Instead of the sequential order of discussion after students number off, the teacher may choose a “temporary boss” – for instance, a student whose last name appears first alphabetically – to assign the order in which teammates contribute to the discussion and make sure everybody contributes equally.

**Additional content:** Students can also discuss seasons, days of the week, school subjects and schedules, sports, and summer plans.

***Structure: Roundtable***

**Sample content:** Create a story based on a picture. This structure is a written counterpart of Round Robin. It works well when students need extra time to process information or to think creatively and write down their thoughts and ideas.

**Directions:** Each team of students receives a picture from the teacher and is asked to create a story in the target language about the picture. Each team has only one piece of paper and only one pen/pencil. The teacher specifies the amount of time for writing the story and starts timing. A randomly selected student (for example, the teammate who is wearing the most red today) first has to say what he/she is going to write, then writes it down. Meanwhile, other teammates have time to think about their sentences to add to the story. After the time is up, students take turns presenting their stories to classmates.

**Suggestion:** It helps if the teacher can periodically announce how much time is left so the teams can provide a logical ending for the story without feeling rushed.

**Additional content:** More advanced students could respond to a set of prepared questions such as, Who is your favorite artist (movie star, athlete, teacher) and why? What places in the target country would you like to visit and why? What do you want to be after you finish school and why?

***Structure: Guess-the-Fib***

**Sample content:** Hobbies, interests, and activities. In addition to the language learning benefits, this structure allows students to get to know their classmates better and is thoroughly enjoyed by students.

**Directions:** Each student prepares three statements in the target language about himself/herself, two of them true and one false. Students write their three statements on a piece of paper, making sure classmates do not see what they write. The students will have to use information about themselves that their teammates may not know, making it harder for teammates to guess what is true and

what is false. After the time is up, students take turns reading their statements to the rest of the team. The teammates try to guess if each statement is true or false. Each student keeps score of how many correct guesses he or she has. The person with the most correct guesses receives praise from teammates.

**Suggestions:** If time allows, the whole class can participate in guessing. The teacher may choose to assign two statements, one true and one false, to save time. This activity usually promotes additional discussion, as interesting and sometimes unusual information is revealed; the students should be encouraged to ask additional questions after the guesses are made so additional time may need to be allowed for this activity.

### ***Structure: Who Am I?***

**Sample content:** Occupations.

**Strengths:** Besides helping to recycle previously learned vocabulary, the structure encourages practice in asking questions.

**Directions:** Students guess the occupation represented by a picture taped to their back. They walk around the room and ask classmates yes or no questions in an attempt to identify their occupation. Only one question is allowed per classmate. The students continue to mingle until all occupations are guessed correctly.

**Suggestions:** Have students who guess first assist those who are experiencing difficulties. The teacher may want to have students discuss possible questions before the activity either using a Round Robin or Think-Pair-Share format within the teams. In Think-Pair-Share, partners think about a problem or question alone for 30 seconds or a minute, work with a partner discussing their respective answers for 30 seconds or a minute, and then share with the class or with their small group.

**Additional content:** Teachers may use this structure when discussing famous personalities from target countries or change the name of the structure to What Am I? to have students guess a specific country where the language is spoken or a specific region of the country.

## **Conclusion**

It would be a mistake to assume that the cooperative learning approach is the only possible way to teach and learn languages. Because of its merits in creating opportunities for maximizing language learning, it certainly deserves room in the foreign language classroom. To achieve positive long-term results, teachers will have to be ready to make their classrooms student-centered, become facilitators, and be comfortable enough to use these cooperative

learning structures frequently.

### Notes

1. All structures mentioned are devised by Kagan and are taken from Kagan publications.
2. See Kagan publications to find out more about team formation.

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# Reaching Beyond the Classroom: Ideas for Using Weblogs in Language Education

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**A. Cendel Karaman  
Harun Serpil**

University of Wisconsin-Madison

A weblog, also called a blog, is a website that facilitates ongoing presentation and archiving of one's experiences, opinions, comments, images, and hyperlinks to streaming audio/video. Weblog users (bloggers) can submit their perspectives for instant web publication through a regular web browser, without the need for web design software. Updates are automatically categorized in chronological or topical order, leading to easy navigation. After an entry is posted on a weblog, others can post comments by entering text in their browsers. The bloggers can then revisit their entries to read the comments on them and to respond to others' entries. This cycle of networking establishes communities of bloggers exchanging information through this dynamic communication platform.

## **Why Use Weblogs in Education?**

Weblogs, described as "second-generation web tools" by Godwin-Jones (2003), are currently used by millions of individuals from a variety of interest groups. For example, many journalists and political activists use weblogs to share their daily personal reflections with others. A recent survey by Perseus Development Group (2004) estimated that by the end of 2004, there will be more than 10 million weblogs. With the spread of weblogs, the way in which content is circulated on the Web is being decentralized (Siemens, 2002; Roberts, 2004). In recent years, many educators have also explored possible uses of weblogs in their classrooms (Oravec, 2002; Richardson, 2003; Weiler, 2003). Several educators have reported promising uses of weblogs at their schools (see Table 1).

## **Table 1. Examples of Weblog Projects at Schools**

User-friendly qualities such as easy content management, accessibility, navigation, publishing, and archiving make weblogs widely adaptable means for instructional design (Bull, Bull, & Kajder, 2003; Ferdig & Trammell, 2004; Kajder & Bull, 2003; Reagin, 2004). Weblogs enable educators to prescreen and select hyperlinks and list them in a categorized format. Unlike a mere listing of hyperlinks on a typical Web page, hyperlinks and user entries can be

Location	School	Grade Level	Subject Area	Link
New Jersey	Hunterdon Central Regional High School	K-8	Writing skills	<a href="http://www.hofbks.k12.nj.us">http://www.hofbks.k12.nj.us</a>
Holland	British School of Amsterdam	K-8	Across the curriculum	<a href="http://www.britains.nl/default.htm">http://www.britains.nl/default.htm</a>
Vermont	Middlebury College & Shrewsbury Elementary (Partnership)	K-16	Writing	<a href="http://mauliacet.middlebury.edu/Short-term/Best">http://mauliacet.middlebury.edu/Short-term/Best</a>
Ohio	Little Miami Schools	K-5	Writing	<a href="http://corner.weblogger.com">http://corner.weblogger.com</a>
Georgia	J. H. House Elementary School	K-5	Writing	<a href="http://weblogs.hofbks.k12.nj.us/peoria/">http://weblogs.hofbks.k12.nj.us/peoria/</a>
England	Hangleton Community Junior School	K-8	Across the curriculum	<a href="http://www.hangletonschools.org">www.hangletonschools.org</a>
Oregon	Meriwether Lewis Elementary School	K-5	Across the curriculum	<a href="http://lewislewis.com/">http://lewislewis.com/</a>
California	Delano High school	K-12	Across the curriculum	<a href="http://www.delanohighschool.org">http://www.delanohighschool.org</a>

archived for easy future access from the main weblog. For instance, foreign language teachers can index hyperlinks to authentic foreign language (FL) texts in accordance with learners' levels. As learners progress in their language proficiency, it is possible to revisit these resources that can easily be accessed due to chronological and topical categorization. Furthermore, weblogs provide an alternative to indexing paper-based student portfolios and other student work. Since the bloggers tend to keep their posts short and to-the-point, weblog entries are easy to read, and the page layouts are efficient. These posts are then archived for future access and retrieval. Thanks to these qualities, artifacts of learners' language production can easily be archived and accessed in the future to make observations about language development.

When the priority is on a dynamic flow of information, weblogs are often more preferable tools than other Web-based content publishing tools. For instance, online diaries prioritize self-reflection, but they do not target thinking critically and receiving feedback from others. Compared with e-mail lists and discussion forums, weblogs are more focused and easier to navigate since students do not have to search through complex folder menus. For a student, publishing on a weblog to the whole world means reaching beyond the classroom. This brings with it a sense of responsibility that may not be fully achieved through discussion forums (Blood, 2000; Bull, Bull, & Kajder, 2003; Ferdig & Trammell, 2004; Kajder & Bull, 2003; Oravec, 2002; Reagin, 2004). Weblogs can also offer unique opportunities for the study of teachers' own teaching. By interacting with their students (receiving students' comments on their teaching) and even letting others (e.g., parents) see and respond to this interaction about their classes, they can get rich feedback about their teaching through this "non-threatening observation instrument" (Suzuki, 2004). Teachers can also integrate statistical software to track the number of hits to their weblogs. For example, teachers can receive data about student presence online, while learners can review the statistics on hits to their weblog posts.

## Why Use Weblogs in Foreign Language Education (FLE)?

Weblogs offer technical, motivational, and professional advantages for the language teacher.

There are several technical strengths that can be derived with the use of weblogs in FLE. Weblogs can help the language teacher address individual learner needs while monitoring individual learner progress within one organized class weblog. The teacher can encourage learners' reflection on their linguistic errors and can direct them to links for specific problem areas. The integrated archiving capability of weblogs makes it possible for the learner and the teacher to observe the gradual development of writing skills and vocabulary knowledge. The teacher can also use the weblog to provide links to authentic reading passages, and this can lead to extended discussions of course content. The learners can enhance their discussions by posting relevant links and multimedia artifacts. Because learners are actively participating by posting comments in the target language, weblogs can facilitate meaningful communication. When weblog assignments require that students refer to online multimedia resources, they help integrate learners' language skills. For example, learners can be asked to refer to the weblog links to online authentic audio and video when collecting information for their weblog writing assignments.

Through using weblogs, language teachers can utilize their students' existing Web technology skills. Besides, seeing the legitimacy of applying their existing Web knowledge to their language learning in class can help students lessen the perceived divide between the classroom and their life outside. Weblogs also offer unique opportunities for native/non-native speaker interaction that would not be possible through other means. Weblog communities can help organize language learning tasks that are not feasible within the physically, geographically, and linguistically confined classrooms. For example, language learners at the intermediate and advanced levels can visit the personal weblog of a journalist in a country and obtain not only culture-specific insights but also engage in meaningful communicative tasks. It is also possible for beginning language learners to utilize weblogs in their studies. For instance, the teacher can select a weblog maintained by a native German speaker who has shown some accomplishment in a field. Beginning learners of German in the U.S. can then cooperatively formulate simple questions or responses to interact with the native German speaker who is invited to visit their class weblog.

Weblogs have high potential for increasing student motivation for language learning. Since students will be freely participating in the weblog activities in which they are interested, they will be intrinsically motivated toward the weblog tasks. Regularly publishing, receiving comments and revising their weblog work can lead to a sense of ownership and individual accomplishment throughout the process. Being involved in activities that are meaningful can be both enjoyable and encouraging. Weblogs can be appealing

for those learners who may feel inhibited during face-to-face classroom tasks. While some learners may be reluctant to fully participate in a classroom discussion, when a class weblog is used, learners become free to choose when, where, and how they are going to write, and so they may feel more comfortable in participating in weblog discussions. Weblogs create room for the involvement of each learner.

Weblogs can also be utilized by language teachers for professional development. Teachers can effectively exchange lesson ideas and provide each other feedback. By posting ideas and links to the wider FLE community, language teachers can also form and extend a dynamic professional network. With regular posts of teachers' self-observation comments, weblogs can be used as effective tools in reflective teaching. Moreover, with regular entries and highlights of regular hyperlinks, language teachers and teacher educators at schools of education can benefit from weblogs when conducting joint projects.

Educational weblog partnerships between K-12 language learners and departments of FLE would also be beneficial for all participants involved. By responding to language learner posts, pre-service foreign language teachers would gain valuable teaching experience, while the learners would benefit from having reliable tutors constructively critiquing their work.

### **How Are Weblogs Being Used in FLE Contexts?**

We have conducted a small-scale survey to explore foreign language teachers' familiarity with weblogs. Our survey of 16 foreign language teachers (EFL, Spanish, French, German, Italian) has revealed that none of the teachers has used weblogs for professional development or for language instruction. Nevertheless, these teachers reported regular use of the Web for communicating through e-mail, searching for information, and reading news. Most of these foreign language teachers stated that Web-based resources and applications play an important role in organizing activities for their teaching. For example, several teachers have created online language learning activities such as word games, quizzes, and chat, and a few have even organized online meetings with classes from target language countries. All these activities could be integrated into a class weblog.

Weblogs have not been widely adapted in the FLE field so far. Currently, there is a very limited number of weblogs with a focus on language teaching, and those available appear to be primarily EFL/ESL oriented. One recent example is Campbell's (2004) use of *LiveJournal* with his EFL class in Japan. (For a list of EFL/ESL weblogs, see: <http://iteslj.org/links/TESL/Weblogs/>).

There are, however, some noteworthy weblog projects in other FLE settings. We have identified two major types of FLE weblogs. The first type, an instructor-initiated weblog, involves an integrated course component in which students are required to participate in certain language learning tasks. An example for this type of FLE weblogs is *Carnet FLE 2004* ([http://www.blogg.org/blog.php/Carnet\\_FLE\\_2004/584](http://www.blogg.org/blog.php/Carnet_FLE_2004/584)). In the *Carnet FLE 2004* weblog,

European college students post entries using various foreign languages they are learning. Another example is the *Spanish Learning Blog* (<http://www.spanish.bz/blog/blogger.htm>), where Spanish teachers can discuss learning tips, links, news, and activities. The second type, a learner-initiated weblog, is not integrated into a formal curriculum. It is the language learner who builds and maintains his or her weblog. One such weblog, *Alaric's Chinese Language Blog & Study Journal* (<http://alaric-radosh.blog-city.com>), is published by a learner of Chinese. This weblog includes several examples of foreign language learner reflections and peer feedback.

### How Can Weblogs Be Set Up and Used in FLE?

Weblogs are easy to create. Anyone who has familiarity with the Internet and Web browsers can build their weblog by using blog-creation tools available online. There are several online services that offer free tool packages for quick weblog setup and use. *Blogger* (<http://www.blogger.com>), *Blog-City* (<http://www.blog-city.com/bc/>), *LiveLogCity* (<http://livelogcity.com/>), *Motime* (<http://www.motime.com/>), *Squarespace* (<http://www.squarespace.com/?partnerTag=cssvault>), and *tBlog* (<http://www.tblog.com>) are among the simplest and most well-known. For more troubleshooting capabilities when onsite technical support is available at a school, one may consider using *Moveable Type* (<http://www.moveabletype.org>) or its byline tool *Type Pad* (<http://www.typepad.com/>), both available online for free trial. *Type Pad* is offered in three languages (French, Spanish, and German). These weblog providers have recently introduced new services that can be used in innovative ways in FLE. For example, with "moblogging," by calling *Blogger's AudioBlogger* from a cellular phone and leaving a voice message at *Blogger*, messages are immediately posted to a weblog as a digital audio file. Using this function, learners with mobile phones can record and archive their spoken reflections in the target language anywhere.

One very useful application for weblogs is the *RSS aggregator*. RSS aggregators eliminate the need for visiting each weblog of interest by helping one to regularly receive categorized, spam/virus-free content from as many weblogs as needed. Richardson (2004) recommends using *Bloglines* (<http://www.bloglines.com>), which is a free RSS aggregator that is available online. No software installation is necessary when using *Bloglines*. This site also offers a unique feature, *Bloglines Clip Blogs*, which enables one to instantly save and share feeds (Internet content) just by clicking on them while browsing.

The language teacher needs to take certain issues into account when designing weblog activities. For example, to what extent does the nature of the activities require the protection of student information? It may be necessary to obtain parental and institutional consent since the content published on a weblog is accessible to all unless there are access restrictions such as user authentication through password assignments. Students' level of computer literacy is another determining factor in the selection of the weblog software

to be used. To maximize student participation in the class weblog, it is crucial for the teacher to identify student interests before setting up a weblog (for a more detailed set of guidelines, see <http://anvil.gsu.edu/TechNotes/>).

As with the use of other Web technologies, there are several limitations and concerns that need to be taken into consideration when using weblogs in education. For a successful implementation of a class weblog project, it is necessary that all students have regular Internet access at home. Weblog entries instantly become published on the World Wide Web, which is a public sphere. Against possible breaches of security, teachers could use functions that alert the teacher each time the class weblog is modified. Whether to use a password-protected or restricted weblog hosted on a school Intranet must be determined. Although these security features may be essential, such restrictions limit the outreach of the blogs to wider audiences. Further, privacy laws such as *Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA)* and *Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA)* and the need for parental consent should be taken into account when administering weblogs at schools. In K-12 settings, students may need to be cautioned not to reveal personal information. Depending on the grade level, teachers should also learn about necessary filtering software so that students do not access sites with inappropriate content. It is also important that teachers draw clear guidelines on the ways in which weblogs should be used. For example, students need to be advised to respect others' viewpoints and follow the guidelines on the acceptable formats of attachments. Because hyperlinks can quickly become inactive, hyperlinks should be regularly checked to see if they are up-to-date. Students' level of computer literacy will be the determining factor in the selection of the weblog software to be used. Before using weblogs in teaching, administering a survey of student computer literacy would be highly beneficial (Kajder, Bull, & Van Noy, 2004; Kennedy, 2003; Oravec, 2002; Richardson, 2004; Stathers, 2004; Weiler, 2003).

There are many possibilities for developing FLE activities to be used with weblogs. For example, students can be asked to revisit their written pieces produced at different phases of their foreign language studies. Since the archiving and indexing features of weblogs make possible easy access to all entries, students can explore changes in their writing style, word choice, and other aspects of language development by looking at these pieces. After a study of these different phases, learners can write their reflections concerning their perceptions of improvements in their writing skills. Another activity can involve learners' visits to collect information about various aspects of different countries with the role of a *Virtual Tourist* (<http://www.virtualtourist.com>). The students can then write and share their reflections on the class weblog. To familiarize students with the daily events of a country, *The Paper Boy* (<http://www.thepaperboy.com>) can be used as a resource in which newspapers categorized by country can be found. These readings can provide authentic discussion topics. Students can also seek advice from expert native speakers on certain discussion topics. Many celebrities and artists from the target culture

are also bloggers, and students may visit their weblogs to look for specific information to present later on the class weblog.

## Conclusion

Although exemplary weblogs for foreign language teaching and learning are yet to appear, our review of weblogs confirms that the technology can be fruitfully applied in foreign language education and teachers' professional development. The foreign language teachers we surveyed have reported regular use of the Web for electronic communication, information searches, and professional development. Many language teachers are already making use of Web resources, and they can easily organize tasks using weblogs in their courses. Current scarcity of weblog use by language teachers cannot simply be explained by technophobia or disinterest. Neither pre-service nor in-service foreign language teachers have been introduced to uses of effective weblog models yet. The potential benefits of weblogs are yet to be realized by foreign language teachers. Hopefully this study will encourage teachers of foreign languages to explore whether weblogs are appropriate tools in their own specific teaching contexts.

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## **Section 4**

### **Choices to Create Real-World Learning**

#### **Choices in Language Learning: An Imminent Call to Respond to a New World Need**

Jacque Bott Van Houten  
Kristin Hoyt



#### **Assessment, Emotional Scaffolding, and Technology: Powerful Allies in the K-12 World Language Classroom**

Connie Fredericks-Malone &  
Nancy Gadbois

#### **The New World: Challenging the Impediments of the Status Quo**

Tom Welch

#### **Service Learning, German Culture, and Intercultural Competence**

Isolde Mueller

#### **Enticing Poetry: A Technologically-Enhanced Approach to the Study of German**

Jörg Waltje



# Choices in Language Learning: An Imminent Call to Respond to a New World Need

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**Kristin Hoyt**

Indiana Department of Education

**Jacque Bott Van Houten**

Kentucky Department of Education

**F**or a long time, we, as foreign language educators, believed that we exclusively held the port of entry key to the wider world for the students who had the privilege to enter our classrooms. Today is a new world. With immigration enriching the texture of our towns, satellite TV bringing foreign programming into our living rooms, outsourcing taking us around the world for technical advice, and the Web connecting us to people and resources everywhere on the planet, our students can have an international experience on a daily basis. These experiences, unlike the many simulated and structured activities in our classrooms, are situated in real life and related to the needs and interests of our students, without deference to their academic giftedness, age, or grade level. In spite of the myriad opportunities abounding to propel students into authentic multicultural and multilingual contexts, we, as language educators, hesitate to fully embrace this redefined notion of whom, what, and how we teach. We cling to conventional, outmoded teaching that reaches only the “best” students, through direct instruction, at times not in the target language, and in a prescribed instructional framework dictated by seat time and weekly schedules organized around the academic calendar, with the ultimate goal of equipping students for international travel and analysis of the world’s literature. Instead, let us re-examine who our language learners are, what our message could incorporate, and how it can be conveyed. Present realities underline the necessity for additional opportunities and novel approaches that match the aspirations of a diverse group of *new world* language learners.

*Present realities underline the necessity for additional opportunities and novel approaches that match the aspirations of a diverse group of new world language learners.*

In our honest acknowledgement of these circumstances, we concede that we must address the who, what, and how of this new world learning:

Who are these new world language learners? What is our message? and How do we respond? To answer these questions necessitates choice because of the inclusiveness of this new world paradigm. Who are these new world language learners? They are a broader, more inclusive, and more divergent group of people. What is our message? The new world message reflects a more comprehensive and differentiated repertoire of content, readily available and accessible in a multitude of formats and media and not restricted by time and place. Finally, how do we respond? This new world articulation of strategies, approaches, policies, and models reflects how we are going to respond to the need for change. Embracing such choices presents a daunting challenge to the profession, requiring us to forfeit the familiar and comfortable and to confront traditional barriers with fresh vigor and creative strategies. It means challenging ourselves to take choice into account in how we, as second language educators, consider the framework, setting, delivery, assessment, and critical role of second language learning in the 21st century. The far-reaching and long-term benefits to learners, to our profession, and to our nation merit our engagement.

### **Who Are These New World Language Learners?**

It is time to genuinely embrace the maxim “languages for all” instead of simply giving lip service to an idealized notion of inclusiveness. The hour is upon us to take steps forward in the planning of curricular offerings that are responsive to the goals and ambitions of all language learners of any age and in any learning environment. New world language learners are in elementary schools, middle or junior high schools, traditional high schools, comprehensive high schools with technical and vocational programs, community colleges, liberal arts colleges, universities, or graduate research institutions. These new learners are also looking to use languages in a vast array of careers and for personal enjoyment and enrichment. The moment is now to honestly admit that we do not yet fully understand and adequately address the varied aspirations of this broad group of hopeful language learners.

As a profession, we are advocating for second language study as an essential part of any and every student’s preparedness for today’s world, yet we are still hesitant and considerably unprepared to invite the entire student population into our world language classrooms. *Every* student means not just the college-prep high school student or postsecondary language major, but the PK-20 population inclusive of all elementary school students, middle schoolers, heritage language learners, students with disabilities, career professionals who need languages for special purposes, vocational and technical school students, adult learners, and so on. If we were to imagine the academic plans and career ambitions of the entire range of potential language learners, we might be closer to appreciating the comprehensive charge before us to make the language learning experience in the academic environment more responsive, relevant, and meaningful.

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In our academic institutions, we cannot delay in extending our vision further to develop an understanding of the needs and interests of those students beyond the ones we have traditionally met in our language classrooms. Ruth J. Simmons (2004), President of Brown University, clearly articulated the problem and the challenge facing us:

Many students may not recognize the potential of foreign language study to shape their outlook on living in society because traditional language and literature study (in spite of recent efforts to reconfigure and broaden the courses of study) may still seem too removed from the practical issues with which societies concern themselves today. . . . We have an opportunity to make the case for why studying languages is an important and necessary approach to attaining the discernment and skills needed for the management of many modern issues. (pp. 685-686)

The charge before us is great. Our profession must conduct a far-reaching and comprehensive needs-assessment study to specifically identify this all-encompassing group of new world language learners and more importantly to discover their particular hopes and aims. If we believe that second language learning and cultural awareness are essential to the well-being of all 21st century citizens, we must not disguise these skills, competencies, and understandings as relevant to only a few. We are obliged to convey the indispensable nature of second language learning and cultural awareness by clearly linking them to our learners' needs and interests, those same needs and interests that are wed to the real world. How we meet this challenge depends to a great extent on our flexibility, our readiness to accept change, and our ability to provide choice in conveying a significant message.

### **What Is Our Message?**

Given the inclusive nature of whom we acknowledge should be learning world languages today in America, it becomes our responsibility

to also acknowledge that, in many cases, what we teach and the learning opportunities we provide match the objectives of only a small minority of that student population. We as language educators have the expertise to facilitate the learning of languages. It is essential that we prioritize our instruction to capitalize on language as a vehicle to open the doors unto different peoples and cultures instead of focusing on the system and structure of language and indulging in analysis of the features and mechanics of language.

We must clearly identify and explicitly define the message that we have for our new world of many and varied language learners. What exactly is this message? The message lies within the distinctive nature of the content dictated by the needs and interests of the language learners and their unique purposes for learning languages, which in our current society can be organized into five broad categories: (a) personal enrichment for informal and academic situations, (b) capability to participate in casual interaction, (c) specialized and technical skills for a vocational setting, (d) increased cognitive capacity, and (e) government intelligence and national security. The commonality among all these varying intentions for learning a language is the precursor of a basic facility with the language in order to be able to accomplish the desired goal of language use for a particular purpose.

### ***Personal enrichment***

In the liberal arts tradition, many people see learning another language as part of a well-rounded education. They believe that this opportunity to acquire knowledge and information about the behaviors, norms, and everyday customs of a people, with a focus on arts and literature, is a culturally enriching experience that better prepares one for life and deepens one's understanding of the world (National Association of State Boards of Education, 2003). State department of education policies related to criteria for honor diplomas and high school graduation requirements as well as university entrance and exit requisites support this notion. The learning of any language, particularly accompanied by study of the cultures of those who speak the language, serves a student well, regardless of the end use of that language. However, the more difficult sell of a humanities focus in the current market indicates that other language learning purposes that claim more practical application, may have more support among today's learners (Goldberg, Lusin & Welles, 2004). If this is true, and a growing majority of students want to use their language of study for reasons other than those directly related to the humanities, we should be addressing students' purported objectives by offering more choice in the content of our secondary and postsecondary language programs.

*A growing majority of students want to use their language of study for reasons other than those directly related to the humanities; we should be addressing students' purported objectives by offering more choice in the content of our secondary and postsecondary language programs.*

Many college and university programs have expanded commendably to include new approaches aimed at cultural studies, business and technical language, and current issues courses, along with internships and project-based or service learning experiences (Goldberg, Lusin, & Welles, 2004). Now, with new opportunities for federal funding available, some colleges have also begun to add new and expand existing programs for less commonly taught languages (U. S. Department of Education, 2004). At the secondary level, there is more opportunity for moderate levels of proficiency gain due to the presence of some longer sequential programs resulting from the “push down” of language courses into the middle school or junior high school setting. Innovative programs are emerging, such as Michigan State University’s Center for Language Education and Research (n.d.) curriculum packets focusing on topically-oriented business language for advanced secondary students. At the same time, however, many programs continue to operate in the long-established literature-only framework. In secondary schools, where textbooks often drive the curriculum and students who enroll beyond the second level are steered toward Advanced Placement courses, few choices exist for students beyond the liberal arts model. And in the postsecondary context, the literary expertise of most language professors mirrors the institutionalized literature tradition of their own background and academic preparation. The ritual of perpetuating this system goes unquestioned and is promulgated in the teaching that we witness in many college settings.

### *Casual interaction*

Most students expect the outcome of their language learning experience to be, at the very least, the acquisition of basic interpersonal communication skills for casual, social interaction with speakers of another language (Alalou & Chamberlain, 1999; Antes, 1999; Tse, 2000). This motive for language learning resides at the heart of human existence and will invariably remain with us forever. Even those language learners who are able to identify specific technical applications of their language knowledge for particular career or professional needs will invariably encounter some occasion for use of the language in social situations, involving basic human interpersonal interaction. So, although it might be clear that virtually all language learners share an interest in language competence for casual interaction, our challenge as language educators is greater than merely setting the stage for that language

learning experience. We acknowledge that our task is much more complex as we recognize the way in which students think about their own language use, how they perceive their own process of learning language, and the manner in which they pursue their goals for personal language learning.

Today's students have a much greater instrumental motivation for studying language and are very pragmatic in their approach to learning (Crookes & Schmidt, 1991; Oxford & Shearin, 1994). They are uninformed about principles of second language acquisition and do not realize the duration of time and the diligence of commitment necessary to attain some desired level of proficiency (Barr-Harrison & Horwitz, 1995). And they are not really sure where, when, and how they might use their language skills in the future (Hoyt-Oukada, 2003). Even in a new world where language learners may have more occasion to navigate their own connections with real world language and culture, there remains a responsibility on the part of language educators to recognize the beliefs about language learning that are held by our students and to equip them with understanding of the language learning process, the tools to facilitate that process, and information on how they might use their acquired language skills.

***We face an ongoing challenge to clearly convey, to not only our students but to the general American public, what is involved in language learning in terms of exposure to the language and commitment to the learning process.***

There is widespread misunderstanding of what is entailed in learning a language and reaching a desired level of proficiency, which for most is at least the level of minimal competency that facilitates basic interpersonal communication. We face an ongoing challenge to clearly convey, to not only our students but to the general American public, what is involved in language learning in terms of (a) exposure to the language, involving a time commitment of some measurable duration along with relatively consistent access to meaningful opportunities for communicative language use, and (b) commitment to the learning process, including student initiative and self-direction and the application of language learning strategies. As a profession, we need to identify and exploit various methods and techniques to make language learning more transparent to all. Further, every language class should incorporate explicit attention to learning styles and strategies. Teachers should be equipped to lead students in not only identifying and recognizing their own learning styles, but also in developing an awareness of appropriate and useful strategies for language learning (Cohen, 1998; Oxford, 1990). Finally, the manner in which we can demonstrate to our students how they might use the language is by authenticating our language learning programs with

real world, meaningful language use within the classroom, within the school community (by capitalizing on connections to other content areas), and beyond the academic environment through cultural exchange and service learning.

### *Career enhancement*

For a growing number of people today, the foremost objective for language learning is to acquire specialized or technical communication skills for interaction with speakers of another language for particular vocational purposes. We observe the impact of this need in (a) the high demand for speakers of different languages to translate for non-English speakers in the delivery of medical services, in law enforcement, and in the courts; and (b) the frequent request for Spanish instructors to conduct language classes for the general community and train groups such as firefighters and police. University language departments are called upon to provide specialized language courses for those going into health care, criminal justice, social services, agriculture, journalism, banking, international business, and many other career areas. There is a valid and growing need, desire, and market for this type of content-related language instruction, but few language educators are truly prepared to deliver it, and still fewer programs are flexible enough to accommodate it.

Some secondary and postsecondary institutions have heeded the call with innovative approaches. Some examples include high school medical terminology Latin classes; dual degree programs in international economics and world language; K-12 teaching assistantships facilitated through foreign embassies where American students abroad earn service learning credit, satisfy student teaching requirements, or both during their assigned assistantships; and People Learning Others' Ways (PLOW) programs, where high school and college students interact with farmers and migrant workers in classes where each learns the other's language and culture, with a focus on agriculture. Also, internships abroad in businesses, engineering firms, and hospitals, for example, strengthen the potential for economic development in our states that depend more and more on foreign investment and international trade. Language learners who participate in these programs typically have a high level of target language proficiency or, more frequently, work in an English-speaking country. If more students were to attain higher degrees of language proficiency earlier, institutions of higher education would most likely respond by making more opportunities available in more countries and across more career areas. With business forecasts predicting the greatest gain to come from Asian markets, our educational institutions need to provide increased opportunities at all levels to acquire the languages spoken in Asian countries.

Regrettably, widespread expansion of such programs is hampered by budgetary constraints as well as various institutional and state regulations. These inventive integrated programs respond to local needs and ultimately bring more students into the realm of language programs. Yet growth of such programs is hindered by (a) unyielding state rules governing the status of

teachers in classrooms and (b) states' postsecondary commissions requiring a minimum number of majors to keep degree programs viable, which discourages faculty from experimenting with interdepartmental programs since the number of majors counted for each separate department could potentially decline. The multicultural and changing face of our local communities and the growing international workplace demand that both secondary and postsecondary systems address policy change to permit flexibility in preparing students for pragmatic uses of languages.

### ***Increased cognitive capacity***

Recent brain research suggesting the impact of knowing two languages on increased mental agility and capacity for problem-solving, creativity, and higher order thinking has prompted a surge of popular interest in language learning. Attention has primarily been focused on early language learning, which positively affects brain "plasticity" (Begley, 1996; Petitto & Kovelman, 2003) and increases density in the left hemisphere of the brain, critical for most language functions (Mechelli, et al., 2004). But interest has also been directed toward language learning by aging adults whose fluid intelligence is enhanced when high cognitive function is sustained (Baltes, Sowarka & Kliegl, 1989; Rowe & Kahn, 1997). The conclusion is that language learning at any age is cognitively beneficial, but early starts are particularly important for the effect they can have on students' overall learning capacity. For this reason, FLES programs are emerging across the country, requested by parents and supported by school administrators eager to adopt any educational model that promises to raise student test scores (Balona & deLuzuriaga, 2004). Too often these hastily implemented initiatives, though founded on sound principles supporting cognitive development, fail to address two crucial factors: (a) the critical importance of assigning equal status to language study among other subject areas by integrating the language program into the general curriculum; and (b) the vital nature of a well-articulated program that is founded on logical steps to proficiency, where curricula for the middle and high school years build on what students learn in elementary school (Curtain & Dahlberg, 2004; Ezarik, 2002). The message we should convey is that students stand to cognitively benefit from early exposure to world language learning, but thoughtful consideration must be given to planning vertically aligned, standards-based PK-12 programs that, over time, allow them to achieve a high degree of proficiency and layer on the study of additional languages.

***Language learning at any age is cognitively beneficial, but early starts are particularly important for the effect they can have on students' overall learning capacity.***

### ***Government intelligence and national security***

Following September 11, 2001, not unlike the jolt that crossed America in the late 1950s after the launch of Sputnik, there was a national outcry for an American citizenry better prepared to speak other languages, particularly those of nations considered a threat to our national security. The Defense Department's sponsorship of the June 2004 National Language Conference demonstrated the seriousness of those concerned this time around. Obviously, the government appeal to swiftly bring a sizable and significantly increased corpus of Americans to capacity in numerous languages, including those less commonly taught languages bearing unique writing systems, is considered unrealistic to those who are knowledgeable about the complexity of language acquisition. Although the need for a long-range plan is evident, there is an historical pattern of tackling or averting such crises before any thorough plan can be formulated, popularly accepted, funded, and implemented. And so, time and again, the concern about American language capabilities subsides without resolution. The message surrounding this issue is not about identifying curricular content related to government intelligence and national security. Rather, the depth, richness, and duration of students' language learning experiences should be sufficient for developing competencies that are, either immediately or with some additional training, useful to the nation in times of need (U.S. Department of Defense, 2004).

#### **How Do We Respond?**

Although the need to enlarge our message with more choice is substantial, the outlook is not entirely bleak. Since the advent of the national *Standards for Foreign Language Learning* (National Standards, 1996), the profession has cultivated a broader view of language and culture learning, that has fostered great strides in the expansion of our language program models. With an increasing number of academic programs offering flexible scheduling, improved opportunities for institutional partnerships, and exponential progress in developing technology, more options are available for opening doors and connecting learners to the content they seek.

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Accordingly, as a profession, we need to identify and exploit various methods and techniques to make language learning more transparent to all. A certain amount of choice in delivery systems for academic language learning exists, from online and synchronous distance-mediated classes, to pre-recorded videotaped classes. A variety of instructional approaches also exists: from direct methods to functional or communicative approaches, from James Asher's conventional Total Physical Response (TPR) to Blaine Ray's TPR-Storytelling, from differentiated approaches to individualized approaches, from pair and group work methods to approaches involving backward-mapping of expected outcomes. An assortment of instructional tools is also available such as WebQuests, cognitive learning activities, and graphic organizers. In addition, teachers use a range of assessment models, from student self-assessment to oral proficiency interviews. All of these delivery systems, instructional approaches, teaching tools, and assessment models are intended to address individual learner needs, but the challenge for many teachers is to identify the appropriate method or strategy that matches the particular student, learning situation, and curricular content.

The survey recently published by the Association of Departments of Foreign Languages on successful language programs at the postsecondary level identified thriving programs as those that feature delivery systems more suited to the needs and interests of students in the following ways: (a) introductory coursework focused on communication and culture, (b) learning opportunities outside the classroom schedule, including community service, (c) support of faculty study and development abroad, (d) advanced curriculum oriented toward language for special purposes and literature from the perspectives of race, class, and gender, (e) attention to accurate student placement, and (f) the presence of campus-wide graduation requirements (Goldberg, Lusin, & Welles, 2004). Language study matched to the 21<sup>st</sup> century learner is characterized by another central feature: technology. Although the findings of Goldberg and his associates were drawn from the university context, the applicability of the survey results to the K-12 setting is straightforward. These program attributes signal ways in which we can improve the second language learning experience for today's students.

### ***A commitment to standards-based learning***

Our first task may well be to take a not-so-new mission more seriously. As we approach the ten-year anniversary of the 1996 publication of the national *Standards for Foreign Language Learning: Preparing for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (National Standards), we should take stock of the implementation of the standards-based model nationwide. Although in most K-12 settings around the nation, schools are required by state legislation or local school governance to adhere to an established standards-based curriculum, and although most states have adopted standards for foreign language learning that mirror the national standards model, we remain witness to widespread practice of grammar-

driven approaches and textbook-based curricula that feature learning about the language instead of acquiring the language, culture treated as an add-on to language instruction and delivered in English, very modest connections to other content areas, and trivial extension of learning beyond the classroom or into the community. In the postsecondary setting, there remain spotty buy-in and sporadic implementation of an integrated model as proposed by the national standards. Greater realization of a genuinely standards-based approach would satisfy much of the call for a more effective delivery system.

Inasmuch as the standards-based model calls for “participation in multilingual communities at home and around the world” (National Standards, 1996, p. 9), we should be compelled to establish more international connections with speakers of the language at home and beyond. As long-distance communication is increasingly facilitated by technology, language learners have ample opportunities to interact with their counterparts around the world. Virtual as well as physical or geographical exchanges should be the order of the day for all second language learners and educators. The potential is tremendous for international partnerships featuring exchanges of ideas, intercultural conversation, and transnational collaboration. For language learners, first-hand observation of others’ experiences could rouse interest and inspire autonomous pursuit of further learning. For language educators and language policy makers, such alliances could kindle opportunities to learn more about other models of language learning, benefiting our American language programs, which lag behind the rest of the industrialized world (Pufahl, Rhodes & Christian, 2001).

The extension of language learning beyond the four classroom walls does not necessarily require thousands of miles of international travel. Ample opportunities for community-based service learning abound in local and virtual vicinities in such forms as working with pre-school heritage language children in day care facilities, creating brochures for community services in the target language, collaborating with Peace Corps volunteers on literacy projects or nationalized senior citizens on oral history projects, or helping people research their genealogy in target language sources. Teachers could also design inquiry-based, ethnographic, investigation-type projects that take secondary and postsecondary students into the physical or virtual community to observe and gather data on a cultural phenomenon for analysis and reporting. This approach advances the concept of community-based projects to a higher level of thinking and prepares students for an even richer social constructivist conception of learning, *criticality*. Criticality is a framework developed by Barnett (1977) and piloted in social work and modern languages, which involves students in examination and critical self-reflection of their language knowledge and skills. This explicit scrutiny of one’s acquired language fosters critical reasoning, equipping students to use their language as a tool for critical action (Myles & Brumfit, 2004).

***Building learner autonomy***

As our language learners have opportunities to engage in more and wide-ranging new world language learning experiences, which may bear little resemblance to conventional language classroom instruction, they will develop more autonomy. The emulated model of “teacher as coach” appropriately corresponds to learning experiences that the student has initiated beyond the classroom based on his or her own personal aims and ambitions and with the guidance of a caring teacher. But certainly it cannot be expected that learners would be capable of such self-directed learning without the mindset, skills, and discipline to carry it out successfully. We can only expect that our students would be adept in the management of their own learning if they have had ample exposure to a constructivist educational model where they are equipped and empowered to be the architects of their own learning.

A promising model for student self-direction comes to us from the European Union (EU) in the European Language Portfolio (Van Houten, 2004). The American rendition, *Linguafolio USA!*, is currently being piloted in five states and builds on the EU model that fosters student awareness of language learning strategies and supports a learner’s progression in setting language learning goals and articulating specific and individualized plans to meet those goals. The *Linguafolio USA!* can be introduced to the youngest of learners. With teacher support and guidance, students increasingly gain independence in managing their language learning experience. Integration of pioneering models, such as this example of student self-assessment, will enrich the language learning experience in the academic context by granting our students more direction and autonomy in measuring and guiding their own learning experiences, acknowledging and valuing what our learners bring to the classroom from non-academic contexts, and permitting students to progress and navigate in the school context in unique and distinctively personal ways. The notion of students as co-constructors of their learning opens up the potential for students to take on a greater role in designing their learning experiences. Language educators must be prepared to share the leadership role with students, granting them more voice in proposing and determining their learning. The mission to bring language learning and cultural awareness to all learners demands visionary thinking, far-sighted experimentation with promising program models, and creative delivery systems that hold the potential of a more focused response to learners’ aims and aspirations. As students recognize and experience more of the connections between their language learning and the world around them, they will become aware of their personal need for languages and be more capable of articulating their own goals for learning. Students who appreciate the pertinence and relevance of their learning will be able and motivated to extend their knowledge with learning experiences based on significant current themes or issues. Increased autonomy in learning and growing familiarity with important topics will fuel students’ demand for similar, ongoing opportunities; students will drive their own expectations higher.

### *Learners as critical consumers of information*

We need to render second language learning experiences more reflective of the real world in which second language learners live, a changing world of variety, variability, and choice. The knowledge, understanding, and skills embedded in language learning and cultural awareness are necessities in today's world, and educators must not stand in the way of making these commodities readily available to the market and easily accessible to consumers. Accordingly, part of the responsibility of educators lies in preparing young people to be critical consumers of all the information that they encounter. Specifically, language learners need opportunities to engage in accessing the media, information, and products in other languages and representing other cultures that dominate their world.

The European concept of viewing, one of the EU international standards for language learning, parallels what the best of our technology educators are advocating in the use of technology as an instrument to better access and manipulate content. As the responsibility of competent technology educators is to train users of technology to be wise consumers of information and informed critics of information sources, the duty of language educators is to prepare language learners to exercise viewing when they encounter language or culture media. The notion of viewing is the exercise of extracting some specific language or culture-specific knowledge, awareness, or insight from a cultural media sample, i.e., gaining some insight into cultural perspectives from a cultural product (Bracht, 2002). With a focus on cultural products that are in the realm of media (e.g., film, television, print materials, websites, and music), the skill of viewing would entail a more profound reading, listening, and observation of the cultural product or sample and gaining some insight into the people and practices of the culture as well as into the language they use for communication.

So much more of the new world in which today's learners live is influenced by, mediated through, and immersed in technology. The new world is one in which language learners seek out opportunities to (a) interact with speakers of the language online, (b) access the media (music, film, television) of speakers of other languages, and (c) expose themselves to authentic language and culture that specifically reflects their particular purpose for learning the language. Inasmuch as technology is rapidly evolving, educators need to keep abreast of technological innovations and how such advances might facilitate and enhance the learning of languages, as well as how institutional structures need to change to accommodate them. Moreover, new world language learners do not expect mere exposure to technology in the classroom; they anticipate its full integration in their personal and academic language learning experience.

### *A critical literacy approach*

Too little of the public's attention has been drawn to the fact that learning a language is literacy acquisition and that learning to understand

cultural perspectives is skill development in critical literacy. Language students learn phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and text comprehension. While these may not be the primary goals of language learning, they are essential to a language learner's success. Beyond this basic notion of literacy is that of critical literacy. Although critical literacy is typically addressed in terms of first or native language literacy, the idea aptly transfers to second language and literacy development as well. According to Robins and Robins (1999), critical literacy acknowledges that texts carry multiple meanings that are culturally and historically situated. Further, they hold that critical literacy implies not only linguistic competence but also cultural knowledge that enables speakers and writers to distinguish and appropriately use language for meaningful communication. Critical literacy also entails a capacity to examine and critique language for its layers of meaning, to evaluate and challenge the construction of texts. A critical literacy approach to second language learning would incorporate experiences that foster cross-cultural awareness and that encourage learners to develop a repertoire of practices to become socially critical, that is to critically reflect as they interact with spoken language, print texts, and multimedia in the classroom and beyond (Gold, 2004).

### **How Should We Proceed?**

As we begin to embrace this new paradigm of student language learning experiences, we should be aware that we will have to confront a number of our established ways and reconsider their appropriateness to the new world of language learning. We will have to take bold steps forward that incorporate curricular reform, pedagogical innovation, policy change, and more intentional and uncompromising advocacy. The following recommendations support an aggressive response to the imminent needs of new world language learners:

- It is now time to offer and implement viable options to the already challenged conventional measure of Carnegie units. By redefining instructional seat time with a label more fittingly reflective of the new world learning we advocate, we can begin to activate learning beyond the classroom setting and away from the classroom desk. Accordingly, we will be challenged to meaningfully evaluate and value language learning to meet contemporary goals in resourceful ways that do not correlate to a textbook unit or chapter. As language learners need more vertical and lateral articulation as well as mobility into the workplace, there is a call for a common metric of proficiency. Perhaps the American field of professional language educators should take a closer look at the internationally regarded European Global Scale of Reference (Council for Cultural Co-operation, Education Committee, Modern Languages Division, 2001) and its positive emphasis on learners' competencies, standing in contrast to defining learners' proficiencies through a taxonomy of their deficiencies.

***We will be challenged to meaningfully evaluate and value language learning to meet contemporary goals in resourceful ways that do not correlate to a textbook unit or chapter.***

- It is imperative that we review our language teacher preparation model and re-evaluate the performances, knowledge, and dispositions that are indispensable to the new world language teacher. As the notion of a new world language learner expands, our concept of a language teacher must expand in a corresponding manner.
- It is important that we recognize and vocalize the vital role world language learning plays in addressing the nation's current educational priority: literacy. We need to draw the public's attention to how second language learning strongly contributes to building the literacy skills of communication, reading, and writing, and develops critical literacy skills through cultural, historical, and literary analysis.
- It is equally important that we promote the models of content-related and content-based world language instruction and begin to integrate other subject areas into language instruction more intentionally so that we can reinforce skills and knowledge across disciplines and broaden prospects for our students' language application.
- Responding to the shortsightedness of others, it is essential that we aggressively promote the inclusion of world languages as an integral component of an internationalized and complete curriculum at all levels. We must ensure that all educational organizations recognize the following: (a) social studies and cultural studies, without world language learning, do not constitute an international education; and (b) inclusion of fine arts in the core curriculum, while at the same time excluding world languages, does not constitute a complete curriculum.
- Finally, we need to move beyond advocacy to activism in lobbying at local, state, and federal levels. We need to seek policy changes and increased funding that will allow all students to be able to acquire and become competent in more than one language.

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# Assessment, Emotional Scaffolding, and Technology: Powerful Allies in the K-12 World Language Classroom

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**Connie Fredericks-Malone**

CDF Music Legacy, Canandaigua, NY

**Nancy J. Gadbois**

High School of Science and Technology, Springfield, MA

Teachers rely on textbooks and authentic documents to render a country's people and culture accessible to their students. These documents often include press releases, commercial films, news broadcasts, and audio recordings. Authentic documents are exterior to a textbook's assessment guide; therefore, the proper assessment of tasks involving documents of this nature can prove challenging to time-constrained teachers.

Effective teachers know which topics interest learners, and they integrate those topics into their curriculum on a regular basis. They also edit and personalize tasks to make learning more meaningful and practical. This strategic appeal to a wide range of students' interests and talents seeks to link effective teaching and learning to the dynamics of what has come to be called *emotional intelligence*.

In *Emotional Intelligence*, Daniel Goleman (1994) cites research that strongly suggests a link between higher academic performance and instructional designs that engage students intellectually and emotionally. According to Goleman, "the abilities called emotional intelligence, which include self-control, zeal and persistence, and the ability to motivate oneself . . . are skills that can be taught to children" (p. xii). A more recent article, "Emotional Scaffolding: An Exploration of the Teacher Knowledge at the Intersection of Student Emotion and the Subject Matter" by Jerry Rosiek from the University of Alabama (2003), builds on Goleman's premise of teaching emotional intelligence to children. The article states, "One practice that became a focus of inquiry in [Rosiek's] groups was the tailoring of pedagogical representations to influence students' emotional response to some specific aspect of the subject matter being taught. This practice was named *emotional scaffolding*" (p. 399). Inherent in the emotional scaffolding teaching practices are the elements that produce in the student an emotional connection to the subject, thereby motivating the student and enhancing the learning process. Rosiek (2003) believes "when education has happened well, we do not simply emerge knowing the world; we also come to love, resent,

endure, care, and be thrilled about things in ways we did not before” (p. 399). Emotional scaffolding will facilitate a connection on a primal level between the student and the subject matter.

For the purposes of this article the authors will use the definition of emotional scaffolding in the context of education, specifically the K-12 world language classroom. Our premise is that emotional scaffolding occurs when a teacher designs a lesson plan, activity, or approach to a subject that incorporates the students’ personal lives, including ethnicity, socio-economic group, history, and culture.

World language teachers have available to them sophisticated technologies that can be used in combination with emotional scaffolding to enhance language learning. Computers, the Internet, DVDs, CDs, audio recordings, and videotapes are extending traditional classroom methodologies and pedagogies. Now that learning stimuli have been identified, acquiring the materials and designing the lessons that actively involve students in their own learning are the next steps. To illustrate how contemporary personalities or pop icons, reinforced by emotional scaffolding teaching practices and technology, are used to motivate students and enhance language learning, we explore the musical works of two artists, Carole Fredericks and José Feliciano.

The critical element, which comes first in the planning, is envisioning appropriate assessment. The next step from the teacher’s standpoint is how to design the lesson plan or curriculum unit to ensure improved student knowledge. Before engaging students in the task, the teacher must determine what targeted understanding is expected from the students. Can the students clearly prove that the acquired knowledge is concrete and meaningful? This approach is based on *Understanding by Design* (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998) and is featured in the assessment strategies video of the Annenberg/CPB project, “Teaching Foreign Languages” (Annenberg/CPB, 2004).

One segment of that assessment strategies video stresses alternative assessment, under the title Integrated Performance Assessment (IPA), a tri-modal task, which emphasizes the critical feedback that students receive from their instructor after each phase of a three-tier task, including interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational modes of communication. After a student completes one mode, the teacher discusses with the student what he or she did well or not so well in order to highlight areas in need of improvement and to encourage the student to perform better on the next mode. Effective feedback offers strategies including circumlocution, inference, and suggestions that reinforce prior student knowledge.

To develop her IPA, Nancy Gadbois, one of the authors of this article, selected a music video by Carole Fredericks due to a belief in the educational value of emotional intelligence. The development of learning activities based on this music video clearly demonstrates the practical use of emotional scaffolding techniques.

Carole Denise Fredericks was born in Springfield, MA, several kilometers from the High School of Science and Technology where Nancy

Gadbois teaches. An African-American from a talented musical family in Springfield, Carole was the sister of the famed bluesman, Taj Mahal. She immigrated to France in the 1970's and rose to musical fame in both Europe and Africa. Ms. Fredericks' untimely death in 2001 came after performing a benefit concert in Dakar, Senegal. At the invitation of the French government, Ms. Fredericks was interred in historic Montmartre Cemetery in Paris. Montmartre's official brochure lists Ms. Fredericks' gravesite along with many French notables.

The realization that Ms. Fredericks was recognized as a major musical icon abroad but not in her native U.S., not to mention her hometown, was of immediate interest to students. Furthermore, the class was intrigued that she had limited exposure to the French language in this country and yet was able to immerse herself in the target language at a later stage in her life, becoming fluent within a short time of her arrival in France. International students in the class were convinced that she was indeed a native speaker, and they were pleasantly surprised to learn of her local Springfield roots.

Technology played a key role in bringing this artist to life for students and thereby establishing a current persona with whom they could identify. Students experienced an emotional connection to a pop icon from their community, and they related to the text in the form of the song lyrics as well as to the subject matter within a structured lesson. The Internet allowed the teacher and students to research Ms. Fredericks' charitable concerts along with the details of her international tours and explore her other accomplishments. The class had access to music videos by the artist that were available in the U.S., thanks to the generosity of Jean-Jacques Goldman and the Fredericks family, including Ms. Fredericks' sister, a co-author of this article. The music videos gave students the opportunity to see Ms. Fredericks perform live both as a solo artist and as a member of a famed trio with Jean-Jacques Goldman and Michael Jones.

### **Sample Lessons**

The sample lessons shared here were created by teachers of world languages. Lesson #1 is from a French class of Nancy Gadbois at the High School of Science and Technology in Springfield, MA. Lesson #2 was designed by Margaret Sullivan for her Spanish classes at East Longmeadow High School in East Longmeadow, MA. Valencia Siff developed Lesson #3 for her students of French at the Collegiate School in Richmond, VA. These veteran world language teachers share lessons they designed as well as student comments, resources and websites.

#### ***Lesson #1***

“A Nos Actes Manqués” (To the Deeds We Missed) was the video used to develop an alternative assessment for a French 4 class of an urban public

high school. The lyrics in the song discuss actions not taken in everyday life or missed opportunities. The video takes place in Paris where Carole, Jean-Jacques, and Michael make their separate ways to a pre-determined location. En route they each observe positive and negative human interactions, accidents, ethnically diverse families, couples, political and social events, and children at play. Upon the arrival of all three at a party, the viewer realizes that they were en route to Carole's own birthday celebration. Friendship, sharing gifts, laughter, good music, and dancing greet the three singers at their journey's end.

The instructional tasks were threefold, covering the interpretive, interpersonal and presentational modes of communication. For the interpretive task, the class was told that the family of the late Carole Fredericks had asked for its help in understanding the message of this particular video. Initially, the students watched the video and then answered a worksheet based on the video's storyline. No written lyrics were given to the class. The students had to rely on the sound and the visuals, including body language, to interpret the theme of the song.

After correcting their sheets and receiving feedback from the teacher, the students moved on to the next phase of the assessment, the interpersonal task. A week after interpreting the music video, students interviewed each other about their preferences for or against certain types of music and activities. No rehearsals or written aids were provided to help students in this task. The teacher scored students individually and gave them feedback to improve their performance.

Two weeks later, the assessment of the presentational mode began. The high school class was asked to make a presentation introducing the artist to an elementary school French class. These high school ambassadors, including several from Dakar, Senegal, were enthusiastic about sharing with younger students what they had learned about Carole Fredericks. Students selected the song, "Kaai Djallema," from the compact disc *Couleurs et Parfums* (Colors and Perfumes), featuring Carole singing with Nicole Amovin from Senegal. The song offered the next layer in this exercise. "Kaai Djallema" is a bilingual rendition of Cyndi Lauper's song, "Time After Time," sung in both English and Wolof. The desired outcome was to send home a bilingual French and Wolof publication to the parents of the elementary school students. That publication was to include information about Carole Fredericks as well as proverbs in Wolof. When the students from Dakar mentioned that they could only speak but not write Wolof, the students went online to search for Wolof information and dictionaries. The project progressed quickly, thanks to the Internet resources and the invaluable presence of these heritage speakers of French and Wolof.

Thanks to publisher software in the Windows XP Microsoft package, organizing and editing a publication for the elementary students to share with their parents was relatively easy. The high school French students were assessed on both their verbal presentation to the fourth grade students and on the written handout prepared for the event.

***Lesson #2***

José Feliciano is our second pop icon. The lesson was developed using the music video, *Oye Guitarra Mía: La Vida y Música de José Feliciano* (Listen My Guitar: The Life and Music of José Feliciano). Our colleague, a teacher of Spanish in a suburban school district that has a very small population of Hispanic students, developed this lesson to encourage her students who are native speakers of Spanish. The lesson also benefited her predominantly Anglo class because it brought to their attention José Feliciano's impact on the American music industry as well as on the Latino music industry worldwide. Because of the popular song, "Feliz Navidad," students already knew the singer's voice and musical ability. In his music video *Oye Guitarra Mía*, Mr. Feliciano's family life in Puerto Rico and the historical events that led him to become the first crossover Latino singer in the U.S. were highlighted. Thanks to interviews in his homeland during family festivals, both teacher and students are able to observe the close family ties and obvious pride that José and his family share about themselves and their island. One video segment traces the challenges that José encountered in the U.S.

What interested the educator most was the potential connection to U.S. history in the segment that featured José singing an innovative version of the national anthem at a baseball game in 1968. The furor that resulted from the artist's creative interpretation of the anthem in a country reeling from the effects of the Vietnam War era was reported in both the Spanish and the English press. Information was available at the artist's website on the Internet (<http://www.josefeliciano.com>).

The teacher designed a unit to last approximately two and one-half weeks, with part of each day's eighty-four minute instructional block designated to study Mr. Feliciano's life. The week-long introductory activity, described here, proceeded from interpretive to interpersonal and on to presentational tasks.

***Day 1 - Interpretive:***

The students filled out a 5x8 index card with all the information they knew about José Feliciano. The card was put away for use in the assessment phase at the end of the two-week unit. Next, without a lyric sheet, students listened to Mr. Feliciano and Marc Anthony sing "Oye Guitarra Mía" twice. The goal was to have the students appreciate the song as a whole. The teacher gave the students a lyric sheet with words missing. They listened to the song a third and fourth time and were expected to fill in the missing words on the lyric page. Students were instructed to look at and analyze the sentence structure to see what kind of word was missing from the lyrics. For example, did they see the set-up for the subjunctive they had been studying? Is there a definite or indefinite article before the line, indicating they would need a noun? Analyzing sentence structure helped them make better decisions with

respect to proper grammar. They were also told to check what might make more sense for the content.

*Day 2 - Interpretive to Interpersonal:*

Once again students listened to the song. This time they sang along with the music video. The instructor divided the class into five groups, each group representing a stanza of the song and one group representing the chorus. They were given ten minutes to translate their section of the song into English. Students were told to use their dictionaries to look up only key words and then to write their translations in an acceptable format in English. They were advised that translating a song would require some manipulation, putting words in a format that makes sense and is appropriate in English without losing the integrity of the song.

This interpretive segment of the exercise was followed by a transition to the interpersonal phase by means of a teacher-led discussion addressing why songs and poetry are difficult to translate to another language. The discussion also addressed the poetic “license” the translator had to take sometimes in order to interpret the lyrics in the new language. The class members read their translated lyrics. Corrections were made by other students or, when necessary, by the teacher. Students were asked to think about their particular part of the song and its meaning as they prepared for the next day’s activity.

*Day 3 - Interpersonal to Presentational:*

Students reconvened in small groups to discuss ways to illustrate their assigned section of the song. The teacher asked students to use as much imagination as possible, using very literal drawings or something that symbolized the definition of a word. All discussion was in the target language. Each group selected one student to write the lyrics on a large display board. Students placed the illustrations on the board next to the appropriate verse in order to give visual form to Feliciano’s lyrics. Each group shared its illustrations with the rest of the class. The other groups were allowed to question the decisions and to inquire why a particular image was chosen. They were encouraged to be as literal or interpretive as they wished with their illustrations but to be prepared to tell the class what their artistic interpretations meant. Students presented very literal illustrations such as a guitar with a mouth drawn representing the line, “Oye guitarra mía, tú que sabes hablar mejor” (Listen my guitar, you who know how to speak better than I). Other groups were more involved in their interpretations. One group depicted the line “la negrura de los cielos me recuerda su mirada.” (the darkness of the skies reminds me of your countenance or look) by drawing a picture of the woman Feliciano sings about, illustrating her with dark eyes and dark skin.

*Day 4 - Interpretive:*

The students were asked to write an analysis in Spanish about the song “Oye Guitarra Mía.” Questions such as “What was the artist attempting to say in the song lyrics?” helped the teacher assess student comprehension. In this activity, students recited lines of the song’s lyrics to support their interpretation. They also wrote a one-page paper expressing their personal opinion about the song, making the case for why they liked or disliked it. Students were responsible for the final edited version of this paper. It was later used in the assessment at the end of the two and one-half week unit.

*Day 5 - Presentational:*

Students read their interpretations and discussed them in small groups. Similarities and differences of interpretations were identified and eliminated. The students placed their work and the illustrations of the song lyrics on bulletin boards for the whole class to view. The music video was the principle element of technology. At each step of this lesson students were engaged on multiple levels. The assessment process was integrated into the unit’s lessons to give immediate feedback to students as they progressed.

**Lesson #3**

The final example comes from a colleague in a private suburban high school. The lesson offers additional support for the use of emotional scaffolding dynamics reinforced by a pop icon, technology, and assessment. This next lesson further illustrates how emotional scaffolding teaching practices are equally as effective with students who are not intimately associated with the pop icon by ethnicity, socio-economic circumstances, location, or direct association with the family. In this lesson, the sheer power of contemporary music, the music video, and the song lyrics transcends all differences between the artist and the students to engage the students at their level of interest.

The lesson emphasizes the interpretive and interpersonal modes of communication. The presentational mode of communication is explored through the students’ discussion regarding their ideas on how to make a music video about the song. Technology critical to this task included the recording, “Qu’est-ce qui t’amène” (What brings you back?) from the compact disc, *Couleurs et Parfums* (Colors and Perfumes), the music video, “*Qu’est-ce qui t’amène*,” and Internet resources. Small group and individual comments reveal what students discovered about the artist.

In the song, “Qu’est-ce qui t’amène,” the artist observes human behavior in love, life, and family. She sings in French on the platform of the train station in Fillmore, California, as an ethnically diverse cast enacts dramatic storylines within the station and around her.

The class knew very little about Carole Fredericks prior to this exercise. For the interpretive mode, “Qu’est-ce qui t’amène” was played twice for a junior class of French 4 honors students. Students were instructed to listen

to the song and to then determine what style of music the song suggested to them. The teacher was looking for students to assign a musical idiom they were familiar with to the song and to awaken their powers of observation. It worked. One student commented, "I liked the soothing, warm quality of her voice. It was like hearing gospel music in French." Another said, "It sounds like the Backstreet Boys; I like it!"

The second time the class listened to the song, students were asked to follow along with the lyrics. The teacher then asked students what they thought the song was about. Students wrote a variety of summaries. "I think Carole wants to show how love lasts forever, surviving breakups and obstacles." "I think Carole believed in second chances and that we should be open to someone's return." "She wanted to show that love brings you back even if there are obstacles." "It shows that people experience mixed feelings and strong emotions when dealing with love."

This interpretive mode exercise was followed by an interpersonal activity that resulted in discussion. For the presentational mode the teacher placed students into small groups. In each group students discussed, using the target language, how they would make a music video to convey the messages they understood from the lyrics. The objective was to have students apply their imagination in combination with their interpretation of the music and lyrics to produce a presentational component. The discussion produced a variety of responses. One group wrote, "There should be rain, a person walking in rain or snow sadly looking for the guy of her dreams whom she finds and then asks the question, *Qu'est-ce qui t'amène?*" An individual student offered, "I imagined a sadder video in a large city like New York. I saw Carole singing in the street while all kinds of people passed by. They all [the people] have experienced the feelings Carole expresses in the song." Another said, "I imagined grey and two people fighting, then the singer in a lonely field while it is raining. Then her guy comes back in slow motion and the colors become bright again."

The homework assignment was to visit the pop icon's website (<http://www.carolefredericks.net>) and to read her biography. Students were asked to find the section on "*Qu'est-ce qui t'amène?*" and to view photos from the making of the music video. The homework assignment was followed the next day with a teacher-led discussion. To determine the students' level of comprehension subsequent to reading a biography of Carole Fredericks in French, the teacher asked, "After reading the artist's biography, what impressed you, touched you, or shocked you?" Students unanimously agreed they were impressed with the artist's courage to move to a foreign country where she did not speak the language in order to follow a dream. The teacher also asked, "Now that you have seen the video, what impressed you, struck you, or disappointed you? Did the clip communicate her message as you imagined the song to mean? How many examples did you see in the video that illustrate her message and asked the same question?" Lively conversation ensued. One of the instructor's favorite comments from a junior summed up the point of view of most students:

I loved the video and I think it conveys the message well. Love is not always perfect; the couples weren't all extremely beautiful people who walk off into the sunset. The power of the message is that despite fights or age or long periods of absence, loves still brings you back to each other. Not even handcuffs and two heavily armed policemen could keep the man from his love.

At the end of the lesson, the teacher used the song, "Qu'est-ce qui t'amène," as a lead-in for the distinction between the interrogative words *Qu'est-ce qui* vs. *Quel* and *Qu'est-ce que*. In other lessons, this instructor used the song, "Respire," from the *Couleurs et Parfums* CD, to reinforce the 'I' and 'R' sounds in French. Often the students gently teased their teacher, commenting, "Ah, Madame, you can find a grammar lesson in anything."

### Conclusion

As Daniel Goleman (1997) suggests, and the authors of this article concur, there is a strong link between instructional design that engages students both intellectually and emotionally and higher academic performance. Jerry Rosiek's (2003) emotional scaffolding dynamics—the tailoring of pedagogical representations that influence a students' emotional response to some specific aspect of the subject matter—are teaching practices that are accessible to every classroom teacher regardless of the subject matter. The goal of this article is to illustrate these theories with examples of their practical application in the K-12 world language classroom.

Pop icons can serve as a conduit for the students' emotional connection within the target language. If the artist is dedicated to improving the lives of others or presents a compelling life story, interest grows within the minds of both teacher and students. The challenge is to find an artist whose music and biography are readily available and, more importantly, are appropriate for the classroom. The use of a contemporary pop icon can be a powerful ally in the classroom when lessons are designed to include assessment, emotional scaffolding dynamics, and technology.

It is the classroom teacher who is closest to the pulse of world language education and student learning dynamics. Therefore, it is the classroom teacher who has the most accurate contextual knowledge of what motivates students to learn within and outside of the classroom. Teachers' powers of observation and experience are invaluable tools. Knowing what students gravitate to in their personal lives can be the key to unlocking self-motivation, thereby enhancing the learning process. This article was written to acknowledge the continued commitment and innovation of K-12 world language teachers and to encourage and, yes, inspire others to do the same.

## Resources

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# Service Learning, German Culture, and Intercultural Competence

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**Isolde Mueller**

St. Cloud State University

Adding a service learning component to a German culture course proved to be an effective way to increase the students' intercultural and language skills. University students who participated in an intergenerational service learning project experienced attitudinal changes that they could not have anticipated when they volunteered to help at a senior citizen care facility in St. Cloud, Minnesota. As a result of this experience, my students added to their language knowledge, communication skills, and intercultural competence.

When asked to analyze her expectations for service learning with elderly people, one of my students wrote the following in her journal for class:

*Ich habe über meine Vorurteile von alten Leuten nach gedacht und habe mich entschlossen, dass viele meine Vorurteile haben weniger mit alten Leuten als mit behinderten Leuten zu tun... Es ist, wenn ich jemand im Rollstuhl treffe, oder jemand, der nicht mehr so richtig reden oder hören kann, dass ich ein bestimmtes Vorurteil von dem Menschen habe. Leider, wenn ich jemand, der älter ist und der auch körperlich behindert ist sehe, denke ich direkt, dass er oder sie auch geistig behindert sein muss. Natürlich weiss ich, dass das nicht stimmt, aber ich kann nichts dafür, dass ich zuerst dran denke. Hoffentlich nach einer Zeit bei St. Ben's kann ich diese Gewohnheit ablernen.*

I thought about my prejudices regarding old people and have decided that many of my prejudices have less to do with old people than with handicapped people... It happens when I meet someone in a wheelchair or when someone does not speak right or hear well, that I have certain prejudices of those people. I am sorry that when I see someone who is older and handicapped, that I assume necessarily that they are mentally handicapped, too. Naturally I know that this is not true, but I cannot help that I think this way first. Hopefully after a certain time at St. Ben's, I can change this habit.

Her realization that there is more to dealing with stereotypes than understanding them intellectually points to the strength of service learning. By involving

students behaviorally and emotionally, as well as cognitively, service learning can be an invaluable tool for teaching intercultural competence. Because cultures consist of attitudes and values, as well as facts, real-life experiences can effectively complement the classroom's synthetic tasks, which are mainly tailored towards the cognitive abilities of the students.

### **The Project**

The quote above and the findings in this article come from a semester-long service learning project in an upper-division German culture course taught at St. Cloud State University (SCSU) in Spring, 2004. Service learning here is understood "as learning that combines public service with planned, related educational outcomes through corresponding academic work" (Havir, Scheel, & Pryately, 2000, p. 33). What connected the class to service learning was not only a focus on German culture and language, but also a focus on culture in general. The ultimate goal was for students to learn to respect others and to communicate effectively across differences. Because the concepts of private and public play such an important role in German self-understanding, both the texts in class and the service learning component of the course explored the relationship between self and society. The initial texts dealt more closely with the elderly in German-speaking countries and included works by Rainer Werner Fassbinder (Fassbinder, 1974), Peter Handke (Handke, 1990), Felix Mitterer (Mitterer, 1997), and Doris Dörre (Dörre, 1995). Besides introducing issues about aging and ageism, these sources provided the students with vocabulary necessary for the task at hand. In the latter part of the course, the readings investigated

*The ultimate goal was for students to learn to respect others and to communicate effectively across differences.*

topics such as the body, identity concepts, and work, areas where issues of private and public intersect.

This focus on individuals in their communities ensured that the students' service learning would necessarily become part of the class discussions. Because the readings thematized their experiences, the students could apply the texts to their situation and view themselves in a larger social and theoretical context.

Our community partners were German-speaking residents at St. Benedict's Senior Community, an elderly care facility in Central Minnesota. German immigrants largely settled Stearns County. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 55 to 65.4% of the population in this area have German ancestry (Neils Conzen, 2003, pp. 5-6). Since many of the students had a German family background, grandparents in senior care facilities, or both, they were personally invested in this minority. In addition, students could not easily dismiss what

they observed and experienced because they, too, would age.

The volunteer coordinator of St. Benedict's Senior Community contacted the Volunteer Link at the university when one of their patients, due to Alzheimer's, reverted back to German as her first language. After I had agreed to facilitate the service-learning project, the volunteer coordinator at St. Ben's invited more residents to participate in the project. All of them spoke German because either they or their ancestors had emigrated to the U.S. from a German-speaking country. The language the students were exposed to can be divided into two groups: some of the residents were native speakers from areas as diverse as Swabia and Sudetenland, while others were heritage speakers whose language is locally referred to as "Stearns County German." This collective term may be misleading as it suggests a homogeneous German, which did not hold true for the residents with whom we worked. Any differences in German dialects among the native and heritage speakers were mitigated by their ability to switch to what is considered standard German.

Throughout the semester, each of the seventeen students volunteered at least 15 hours at the senior care center. They were all juniors or seniors, ranging in age from 20 to 29. The group consisted of twelve women and five men, all Caucasian with European heritage. Fifteen were American citizens, while two students came from Croatia. Most of the students were solid intermediate speakers according to the ACTFL oral proficiency scale. Four students had language skills at the advanced or superior level. With the exception of five students, most had never spent an extended period of time in a German-speaking country. Nine students had been involved with volunteerism during their time at SCSU before participating in the German service-learning project.

Service learning was a mandatory part of the course because the two main class objectives were to develop understanding and respect for others and increase the students' awareness of their role as citizens. The students acknowledged the importance of this work when they referred to their partners at St. Ben's as their favorite textbooks. To alleviate stress and anxiety, students could decide what form their engagement would take. Alone, in pairs, or in groups of three, they worked with Alzheimer's patients, socialized with people in assisted and independent living, organized games or lectures for the residents, served food, developed a dictionary for the staff, or worked with an already existing German club led by a retired German professor. The students all went through a general introduction to the care center and completed a computer workshop about Alzheimer's. To support the students as effectively as possible, I participated in the project, too, and volunteered at least an hour a week.

To process their experiences with the elderly, the students wrote eight journals throughout the semester. Each journal was to address three components: description, reflection and analysis. The last part proved especially challenging since it tapped into higher-level cognitive and language functions. Each journal could deal with the weekly visit at St. Ben's but also respond to class discussion or my comments on the previous journal, creating a meaningful

written dialogue connecting class material with service learning.

The language needed for the work at St. Ben's came from various sources. The first readings of the course dealt with the elderly, introducing the students to the theoretical, social and psychological issues this minority faces. These texts could be mined for the vocabulary items and speech patterns useful for the students' service learning experience. An additional help was the dictionary developed by one of the student groups for the staff at the senior center and also shared with the other students in class. This collection of terms, illustrated through pictures and accompanied with pronunciation, included the categories body, health, and farming, which proved especially popular and helpful. Given the rural background of the residents, the students found farming to be an especially productive conversation topic.

During time regularly provided in class, the students educated each other on topics and discourse strategies helpful when working with their community partners. They discussed discourse strategies such as how to begin or sustain a conversation, whether and when *Sie* or *du* was appropriate, and what type of questions most effectively encourage people to reminisce. Other topics of discussion were more content driven and included what to do in case of disagreement, how to handle potentially sensitive topics such as the Second World War, as well as how to respond to generalizations about young people of today. With the support and advice of the other people in class, for example, two students dared to speak to their community partners about each other's expectations. After addressing their concerns, they could renegotiate what they wanted to get out of their visits.

### **The Evidence of Impact**

When asked to evaluate their language skills at the end of the semester, 13 of the 17 students felt that they had gained in this area. Many of them credited their work at St. Ben's for this improvement. Several also commented on an increased self-confidence which one student explained as follows: "I feel that my language skills have greatly improved, especially conversational skills. Before, I was familiar with vocabulary, but now I feel that I can actually use it."

By using their language skills in and outside the classroom, students explored German culture in Minnesota and in German-speaking countries. To find out about their attitudes and behaviors in regards to cultures, I used the Cross Cultural Adaptability Inventory (CCAI) developed by Colleen Kelley and Judith Meyer (1992). The two authors use four main personality traits to measure intercultural competence: emotional resilience (ER), flexibility or openness (FO), perceptual acuity (PAC), and personal autonomy (PA). They define emotional resilience as the ability "to maintain a positive attitude, to tolerate strong emotions, and to cope with ambiguity and stress" (Kelley & Meyer, 1992, p. 1) and assess it through statements such as "I have ways to deal with the stresses of new situations." Flexibility speaks to a person's openness to ideas that are different from one's own and people who are different

from oneself. To rate themselves in this area, the test taker has to respond to items such as, "I can enjoy relating to all kinds of people." Phrases such as "I believe I can accomplish what I set to do, even in unfamiliar settings" measure personal autonomy, the sense of self someone has in a new environment where the pressures of assimilation might threaten one's identity. Perceptual acuity refers to the ability to read and interpret verbal and non-verbal behavior by considering the context. Kelley and Meyers measured this area by including sentences in their test that target the test takers' ability to see themselves from an outside perspective as expressed in sentences such as, "I pay attention to how people's cultural differences affect their perceptions of me."

The students completed the CCAI at the beginning of the semester so that they could reflect upon their own characteristics and help them verbalize their expectations. At the end of the semester, they retook the test. The resulting self-assessment was meant to give them a sense of closure and help them synthesize their experiences.

The test was originally developed for people planning to study or live abroad. Although the service learning experience at the senior care center was not as intense as immersion in another culture in a different country, the two situations are similar enough to warrant comparison. Rowe and Chapman (1999) claim that just like studying abroad, service learning can lead to a personal self-evaluation and a great deal of learning because it links "a student to an environment in which knowledge can be put to use and reality can be tested" (p. 93). Sharing this notion, several students referred to their service learning in terms of travel because they experienced their time with their community partners as an immersion into a different culture.

In the initial testing, 11 of the students scored above or at average in all four areas. These high levels of cross-cultural adaptability could be due to the large number of advanced students in the class, which meant that they had better developed speaking and cognitive skills. The remaining six students had more conflicted profiles. Half of those students tested above average in three areas, while the other three reached this score in only one area. Perceptual acuity was the most difficult category. Five of the six students did not reach an average score here.

In the end, all four areas showed an increase, even though the gains for flexibility and openness, personal autonomy, and emotional resilience were minimal, only one point on average. Almost every student now scored above average. Only three students ranked below average in one area. The greatest gain came in the area of perceptual acuity where each student gained five points on average. Where the average score at the beginning of the semester had ranked below the average of the test group Kelley and Meyers (1992) had used to establish a mean, the students' average score at the end of the term was above that score. This increase may stem from the work with Alzheimer's patients since this work required a great deal of empathy and willingness to read non-verbal cues.

The four categories of the CCAI were also recurring themes in the students' journals and final papers. The numbers in Table 1 refer to how many students commented on each of the four topics in their journal entries. If a student mentioned them repeatedly, the reference was counted only once.

**Table 1: Student Comments in Journals Reflecting Cross-Cultural Adaptability**

Five students believed that their emotional resilience in unfamiliar situations had grown in the course of the semester. They felt empowered and better able to cope with people different from them in unfamiliar contexts.

Categories of the CCAI	Number of students addressing the category in their journal
Emotional resilience	5 of 17 students
Flexibility and openness	12 of 17 students
Perceptual acuity	6 of 17 students
Personal autonomy	13 of 17 students

More than half of the 17 students saw their flexibility increase because of their service learning experience. Having dealt with their initial discomfort, they believed that their newly developed skills would allow them more openness in other challenging circumstances.

Perceptual acuity was a major issue for six of the participants. Since this ability was especially important in the work with Alzheimer's patients, it is not surprising that five of the six students, whose scores in this area improved, worked almost exclusively with these residents. Because verbal exchanges were challenging, they realized that language was not the only means of communication. They developed sensitivity for non-verbal cues and began to consider the importance of context. Because parts of the conversation would be incomprehensible and incoherent, students needed to draw inferences from their surroundings. Consequently, meaning shifted from being perceived as absolute to understood as situational.

In keeping with the self-discovery aspect of service learning, 13 students commented on their changing identity. Their gains in personal autonomy allowed them to maintain their own identity, even in a context where being themselves meant not fitting in completely. Asked about their piercings or tattoos, for example, they saw themselves from someone else's perspective while having to explain their choices. Students who had initially identified very strongly with the Alzheimer's patients because of a family history of this disease sometimes felt liberated by facing their fears. Interacting with several of the members of the senior community and realizing their differences meant that some of the students could imagine themselves as having different fates than their own relatives.

To go beyond the CCAI, which addresses personality issues, Table 2 documents the social components of service learning. Table 2 shows three recurring themes that most students found relevant.

**Table 2: Students' Reports of the Impact of Service Learning**

The first topic, "I am making a difference" was much discussed in the journals and in class. The students, especially those working with Alzheimer's patients, initially felt torn about their visits because they had no measure with which

I can make a difference.	11 of 17 students
I am learning about diversity and a world bigger than my own.	14 of 17 students
Elderly people face discrimination.	10 of 17 students

to gauge their impact. As their perceptual acuity grew, they became more comfortable because they were less dependent on verbal reassurances from the patients.

Almost all students felt rewarded by experiencing differences. As they moved from general ideas about the elderly to complex and differentiated relationships with the residents at St. Ben's, they began to investigate generalizations and stereotypes as social phenomena.

At the same time, their sensitivity for discrimination against the elderly grew. Because they had discovered how much they could learn from their community partners, they were no longer comfortable in situations where the elderly were infantilized or portrayed as without any importance.

### Narrating Intercultural Competence

The following quotes from the students' work are meant to document recurring themes. The first two deal with negative stereotypes, a topic that because of its centrality to intercultural communication offers insight into how the students came to understand the personal in the larger context of society. Some of the students' understanding surfaced in the form of generalizations in their writings. As he processed the death of a resident with whom he had worked, the following student cloaked his discomfort in generalizations.

*Alte Leute verstehen, dass sie alt sind. Sie bleiben bei St. Ben. 's, weil sie zu krank oder alt sind. Sie wissen alle Leute dort sind alt. Sie verstehen ihre Gesellschaft. Ihre Gesellschaft hat ähnliche Leute mit ähnlichen Problemen. Das Leben von den alten Leuten ist beinahe vorbei. Wenn ein Mensch tot ist, sind die Leute nicht traurig. Alte Leute können Freunde sein. Eines Tages ist ein Freund weg. Der andere Freund versteht, was passiert. Der Freund nimmt den Tod an.*

Old people understand that they are old. They stay at St. Ben's because they are too old and sick. They understand their society. Their society has similar people with similar problems. The lives of old people are almost over. When a person is dead,

the people are not sad. Old people can be friends. One day a friend is gone. The other friend understands what happens. The friend accepts death.

Confronted with an overwhelming situation, the student regressed into the simplified world of stereotyping where he did not have to imagine the loss this death created. To protect himself, he persistently used *their* to emphasize the distance between his world and the world of the people at St. Ben's. Excluding himself from *their* community, he felt protected from death.

Although written by another student, the following quote reads like an explanation to the first one. Abstracting from the personal, this student theorizes about the functions of stereotypes:

*Die Stereotypen, auf die die alten Leute stoßen, sind unzählig. Manchmal scheint es einfacher zu sein, so zu denken, weil man sich damit von dem Thema entfernt. Damit meine ich, je weniger man von etwas weiss, desto einfacher ist es, davon nicht zu denken, und sich davon zu distanzieren.*

The stereotypes old people face are numerous. Sometimes it seems easier to think this way because one can distance oneself from the topic this way. By this I mean that the less one knows, the easier it is not to think about it and to distance oneself.

The student understood that after her experience she would no longer be able to take this way out; she now knew because she had experienced this for herself.

The more most students engaged with their community partners, the more differentiated their perceptions became. They replaced general ideas about the elderly with personal insights gained from interacting with residents. Quite literally, they started seeing differences, acknowledging for example something as obvious as changed hair styles and colors. They were impressed with what their community partners had achieved in their lifetimes. Female students in particular responded to the accomplishments of older women who they now saw as role models. A student athlete, for example, connected with one of the residents over sports:

*Ich habe mit einer alten Frau gesprochen. Sie heisst A. Sie war sehr nett, aber sehr alt und ihr Gedächtnis war nicht so gut. Sie hat mich die gleiche Frage immer wieder gefragt. Ich habe kennengelernt, dass sie Tennis gespielt hat! Das war supercool. Ich habe gedacht, dass alte Frauen keinen Sport spielen, als sie jung waren, war das nicht ok. Frauen müssen nur in dem Haus arbeiten.*

I talked to an old woman. Her name is A. She was very nice, but very old and her memory was not that good. She repeatedly asked me the same question. Then I found out that she played tennis. That was very cool! I thought that old women do not play sports when they were young, that that was not ok. Women could only work in the house.

Another student discovered similarities with her partner when talking about the university and being a student:

*Ich habe viele ganz interessante Leute da kennengelernt. ... Eine andere Dame liebt Mathematik, und sie hat bei einer Universität studiert. Die Leute bei der Universität wollten sie nicht in Mathe unterrichten, weil sie ein Mädchen ist. Die Dame war doch ganz klug und stark, und sie hat ihre Klassen bekommen, um Mathe ein Hauptfach zu machen. Damen wie sie sind Vorbilder für die Mädchen heute. Damen sollen holen, was sie im Leben wollen!*

I have met many very interesting people.... Another woman loves mathematics, and she studied at a university. The people at the university did not want to teach her math because she was a girl. The woman was very smart and strong, and she got the classes she needed to major in math. Women like her are role models for girls today. Women should take what they want from life!

The following student initially struggled greatly with the volunteer work at St. Ben's because of a family history of Alzheimer's. In one of her later journals, as she described a visit to her grandmother who has Alzheimer's, the student's changed perceptions of the elderly came through. Working at St. Ben's helped the student find the courage to face the challenge of her grandmother's illness because she now could differentiate not only between the elderly, but also between herself and her grandmother. She wrote:

*Ich habe letztes Wochenende meine Oma in M. besucht. Sie ist in Assisted Living im Alterheim dort. Mit ihre Alzheimers kann sie nicht viel erinnern. Aber dieses Mal (mein erster Besuch nach dem Anfang unserer freiwilligen Arbeit) war ein bisschen anders. Die Leute waren anders zu mir. Sie hatten mehr Individualität. Meine Oma war auch anders.*

Last week I visited my grandma in A. She is in assisted living there. With her Alzheimer's she cannot remember much. But this time (my first visit since I started to volunteer) was somewhat different for me. The people appeared to be

different to me. They had more individuality. My grandma was different, too.

Dealing with her family issues in a less emotionally charged environment, the student gained enough distance to see her personal situation anew. She could then recognize not only her grandmother's individuality, but also her own. She understood that because her grandmother was different, she could be, too. From simply being afraid of turning old, the student came to see the advantages of old age because she had found positive role models in the senior care center.

Interacting with several of the residents produced more complex notions of cultures. Even in a relatively limited population, one student encountered very different attitudes towards social issues. After interacting with one woman who held strong views against abortion and homosexual marriage, he wrote:

*Ich sehe sie als konservativ an, aber was fuer uns konservativ ist, kann liberal für sie sein. Sie kann denken, dass das Frauenwahlrecht sehr liberal ist oder dass weisse und schwarze Studenten die gleiche Toilette benutzen ist liberal. Ich muss nicht denken, dass sie homophobisch ist, nur dass sie aus einer anderen Kultur kommt.*

I see her as conservative, but what is conservative for us, can be liberal for her. She can think that women's right to vote is very liberal and that black and white students using the same toilet is liberal. I must not think that she is homophobic, only that she belongs to another culture.

This insight into the relativity of the terms *liberal* and *conservative* shows a high level of intercultural competence. From the three stages of intercultural awareness that Hanvey describes (as cited in Samovar, 1987), this student has reached, at least in this instance, the highest level. Instead of a superficial awareness of cultural traits or an awareness of significant and subtle cultural traits, he understood "how another culture feels from the insider's perspective" (Hanvey as cited in Samovar, p. 345). By adapting his community partner's perspective, he saw her in her cultural context. Understanding that knowledge is contextual let him put aside the question of who is right or wrong. This made it possible for him to consider a larger context where he could interpret the information at hand without attaching a value judgment to it (Eyler & Giles, 1999, p. 111).

The same student returns to this topic in a later journal after meeting someone who is very different from the woman described above. He concluded, "ich kann nicht eine Kultur verstehen mit einer Erfahrung, ich muss viele und viele haben." "I cannot understand a culture with one experience, I must have many and many."

## Conclusion

With its ability to foster “tolerance and a growing appreciation for others” (Eyler & Giles, 1999, p. 54), service learning can provide a setting where students can apply and experience the principles of intercultural communication. Although a semester-long project like the one described above has the advantage of letting students develop personal relationships that help the learning process, Eyler and Giles (1999) report success with shorter term projects, too (p. 67). The strength of the project at St. Ben’s is its contextualization. Working with the elderly validated the students because their expertise in German and their intercultural competence made a difference in the community. When students realized the relevance of class material in a real-life context, their motivation to learn increased. As one of the students put it: “The experience at St. Ben’s gave me a unique opportunity to apply all of my knowledge from class to real life at St. Ben’s and my life outside of St. Ben’s. So I was able to think critically for real, not just in order to write an essay, etc.”

*When students realized the relevance of class material in a real-life context, their motivation to learn increased.*

Even if there is no perfect match in the community where students can speak the target language, the intercultural competence objective is still achievable and worth pursuing. For college instructors, working with international students on campus might be most feasible. But getting involved with the local boys’ and girls’ clubs, hospitals, or day care centers will be equally meaningful and productive. Because intercultural competence can be explored through various differences such as class, gender, race, age, and ethnicity, many community partners exist that can help foster a greater understanding for diversity.

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# Enticing Poetry: A Technologically-Enhanced Approach to the Study of German

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Jörg Waltje  
Ohio University

During the regional meetings of our foreign language alliance and at teacher workshops conducted at our university, we often hear from colleagues at the high school level about how hard it has become for them to get students interested in studying a language and to keep those who do sign up involved, motivated, and challenged. For many language teachers, there is always a concern that students may jump ship and pick a subject that promises a better grade for much less effort. In addition, especially in French and German, there is also the fear that more and more students—if they decide on taking a language at all—will sign up for what from their perspective amounts to the path of least resistance, namely Spanish, the rumored “easy language.” The last available numbers for foreign language enrollments in public secondary schools show that although overall enrollment in languages has increased, it declined for French and German, with more and more students (68.7%) signing up for Spanish (Draper and Hicks, 2002, pp. 1-2).

The temptation for some teachers is to scale down their expectations, to settle for less, and to keep students happy with the allure of easy grades, little homework, and an unlimited amount of fun lessons and activities. What was once referred to as the “Friday Fun Sheet” (crossword puzzles, cartoons, and fill-in-the-blank handouts that reward students for the hard work done during the week and thus form a transition into the weekend) has slowly become part of the everyday curriculum. Though the procedure is meant to entice the student, it undermines the teacher’s ability to teach communicative skills, content, grammar, or larger chunks of text. For the student who hopes to continue the language in college this can result in the frustration of having to enter at a lower-than-expected level.

Faculty at our institution pondered not only the root of the problem but also how to attract more students to the study of language, challenge them to do more than the bare minimum and give them the kind of pride in their own achievements that will motivate them to actually try to master a language instead of just squeezing by. These comments and concerns are in no way meant to put the blame on colleagues at the high school level, many of whom must deal with a system of secondary education that in some respects values short term memory and good testing skills over careful scaffolding and the acquisition of “deep” knowledge.

Of course, the goal is not to revolutionize the American educational system but simply to create something of value for language teachers that will

help them draw their students in and engage them. We want to supply a tool that not only conforms to the five C's of the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning* (National Standards, 1996), but at the same time is indeed fun and engaging, a catalyst that will encourage students to open up and share their opinions and that provides ample opportunities for meaningful conversations and the negotiation of meaning. The solution was a multimedia approach to the teaching of poetry.

### **Why Poetry?**

Some people may ask, "Why poetry?" but the rationale behind our choice was rather simple. Poetry is normally a relatively short piece of literature, such as a few stanzas or a handful of lines. It is much easier to handle within the confines of school lessons than a complete play or a short story. Yet at the same time poems are often condensed, multi-layered, and, in the best of cases, provide plenty of food for thought. It is true that poetry is not always easily accessible since a good poem lies somewhere beyond mere words. "It is the intangible, an exultation in things vaguely apprehended, something which emerges out of its own form and which cannot exist without that form. Any poem that can be completely understood or paraphrased is not a poem but rather prose in chopped up lines" (*Poetry Magic*, n.d.).

***We were determined to provide a use of technology that will further the understanding of both content and language and at the same time make the target language both accessible and easy to relate to.***

However, this quasi open-endedness of poetry works to the educator's advantage. Good poems explore the nature of the human condition, they become an act of discovery that requires an effort to be understood, yet they also allow for a multiplicity of interpretations and approaches: "In poetry, it is the connotations and the 'baggage' that words carry . . . that are most important. These shades and nuances of meaning can be difficult to interpret and can cause different readers to 'hear' a particular piece of poetry differently. While there are reasonable interpretations, there can never be a definitive interpretation" (*Wikipedia*, n.d.).

Thus, poetry seems indeed a good choice for this project. Poetry is open-ended, not too rigid, and it encourages different approaches and opinions while affording the learners a manageable, though highly condensed, amount of text. Most importantly, poetry lends itself well to a multimedia approach. We were determined to provide a use of technology that will further the understanding of both content and language and at the same time make the target language both accessible and easy to relate to. In order to disseminate the poems effectively, we came up with the following design for a Web application.

## The Design

The Web pages were developed with a definite goal in mind: not having the technology play the most important role, but rather focusing on the content and the language of the pages. The Web pages needed to be accessible, user-friendly, and easy to navigate. Indeed, the design of the “container” was intended to be as little of a distraction as possible. This meant no blinking text, no cluttered pages, and no animations. Instead, the design is dark, legible text on a white background, interspersed with a variety of URLs that link to other resources and downloadable documents for further study.

The system was patterned after Boling and Soo’s (1999) suggestions regarding good software design:

1. The interface and terminology are consistent from screen to screen.
2. The layout of each screen makes good use of space.
3. Legibility and readability are high.
4. The software makes good use of contrast, repetition, alignment, and proximity.
5. Serious navigational errors are prevented.
6. Undesirable actions are easily reversed.
7. Audio and video playback (where applicable) is of good quality.

The Main Page (available for preview at <http://lrc-web.modlang.ohiou.edu/lrc/poetry/>) supplies basic information about the German poetry project. A navigation bar on the left hand side directs the user to pages providing more information about the editors, about poetry in general, and about the rationale behind this Web portal. Of course, it also provides a clickable list of the authors whose poems are featured on the pages. This layout remains the same no matter where the user would go from here. The Web page is always divided into three frames, whereby the top frame displays the logo of the project, the left frame always displays the navigational links, and the main frame either displays biographical information about a particular author or presents the poem, complete with a glossary or a translation if deemed necessary (see figures 1, 2, and 3).

While all of the above may sound rather traditional and one-dimensional (why not use a book if all we have is images and text?), it is the presentation of the poems themselves that makes all the difference. First of all, the underlying theme of the website is “The Poetry of Relationships.” All the poems that appear on the site deal with human relations, whether love, longing, friendship (or possibly the lack thereof), an individual’s feelings of despair and isolation. We believe that this approach keeps the poetry interesting to its target audience, which will consist mainly of young adults. Intimations of a divine power in nature or the aestheticized description of, for example, a Roman fountain, are less likely to engage high school-age adolescents than the recognition that these short pieces of literature are indeed speaking to them



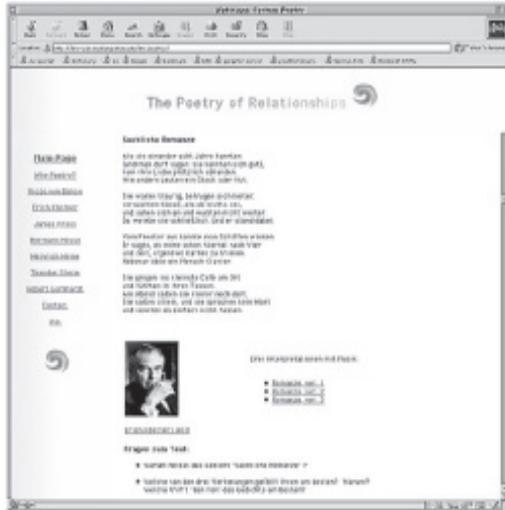


Figure 3 Poem Page

offer differing readings of the same poem in order to point out that intonation and stress can sometimes change both perception and meaning of a piece of art. Many of the poems are presented in musical form as well, since they have been adapted by classical interpreters as well as by modern popular entertainers. A Heine poem, set to music by Schubert, can be found next to Hermann Hesse interpretations by a German metal band or a folk song rendition of a Theodor Storm poem. The songs are either a direct link to an external page, or they are available for playback and download as MP3s and QuickTime files via internal links.

It is this kind of eclectic approach that we believe will be successful with students. A poem thus does not present itself as something musty or ephemeral that students approach with reluctance, but rather it will be perceived as enjoyable and appealing to the students' own interests and experiences. Learning will become exploration as much as entertainment. The story contained in each of the poems will serve as a springboard for students to discuss their own ideas and experiences (the communicative factor), yet it will also help the teacher to introduce new vocabulary and grammatical functions to an audience that is more captive, since they are highly involved in what they are reading.

### Future Prospects

The Web site is still a work in progress and will be fully functioning and available to the public by March 2005. Currently, we are distributing the prototype to interested teachers, using their feedback to tweak our offerings and fine-tune the site's appearance. Some of the things we have learned from

our potential users already have been incorporated or will be made available in the near future. While we at first thought that the website should be completely in German, we were made aware of the fact that some teachers would like to use it in beginning classes, yet are not able to do so, due to the fact that all instructions, annotations, and guiding questions are presented in the target language. We are therefore working on implementing English adaptations of the poems as well as translations of the biographical texts that accompany the authors' portraits, the guiding questions, exercises, and all other ancillary materials. The story contained in each of the poems will serve as a springboard for students to discuss their own ideas and experiences (the communicative factor), yet it will also help the teacher to introduce new vocabulary and grammatical functions to an audience that is more captive, since they are highly involved in what they are reading.

We will also supply downloadable worksheets in MS Word format for each unit since teachers expressed an interest in them and pointed out that for them it would be immensely helpful to have something in hand that they could distribute to their students. Not all classrooms are equipped with a cluster of computers; sometimes it might be only the teacher's presentation station from which the Web site can be accessed and the audio files can be played, while students work on a photocopy of the handout. Although the ideal situation would be for students to have access to the materials in self-directed study or maybe in pairs, a mingling of old and new technology is certainly acceptable when it helps disseminate the content and draws more people towards the use of the Web site and its concepts.

The Web site was developed following guidelines for optimal language learning environments (Egbert, Chao, & Hanson-Smith, 1999), thus it will function in a variety of environments and be applicable for learning scenarios both in and outside of the classroom:

1. Learners have opportunities to interact and negotiate meaning.
2. Learners are involved in authentic tasks.
3. Learners are exposed to and encouraged to produce varied and creative language.
4. Learners are guided to attend mindfully to the learning process.
5. Learners work in an atmosphere with a low stress/anxiety level.
6. Learner autonomy is supported.

The long-term effect of this kind of "Poetry Portal" cannot yet be determined, but we certainly hope that not only teachers of German will make ample use of what we have to offer, but that other language professionals will pick up the idea and produce similar applications for their respective students. We are prepared to disseminate our templates to interested teachers of other languages and then lend them a hand in integrating and distributing content for their particular discipline. Providing people with the technology would mean that teachers could concentrate on the actual content and not re-

invent the wheel. Our goal is thus indeed twofold: on one hand, we want to whet students' appetites with appealing, easily accessible, and pedagogically sound materials in order to encourage them to immerse themselves in the study of another language and culture while at the same time realizing that human experience, as related through art, will show many commonalities. On the other hand, we want to encourage language teachers to replicate our approach and offer materials that are challenging, yet motivating and highly entertaining, and that will attract students in ways they will not be presented with in any other classes.

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# The New World : Challenging the Impediments of the Status Quo

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**Tom Welch**

Kentucky Department of Education

**A**s we ponder the laudable call set forth for responding to “Choices in Language Learning: An Imminent Call to Respond to a *New World* Need” (Hoyt & Van Houten, in press), it is useful to summarize what that particular vision advocates. It is also helpful to define the impediments in this *old world* that might keep us from answering that call. The *new world* of the 21<sup>st</sup> century – our post 9/11 world with its tectonic shifts in geopolitical, economic, and cultural spheres – is indeed a different environment. While technology has us rushing faster and faster toward the idea of a global village, the need for world language skills increases in importance. Hoyt and Van Houten frame the call by asking three critical questions for addressing new world language learning: “Who are these new world language learners? What is our message? and How do we respond?” (in press). This brief response attempts to examine a single, albeit crucial, impediment to the inspiring vision Hoyt and Van Houten paint, namely the Carnegie unit. It is not necessarily an attempt to further the professional literature on the subject of the Carnegie unit, as there are others such as Wellman and Ehrlich (2003) who have furthered that discussion with a clear account of the history and some of the consequences of the Carnegie unit.

The purpose of the discussion presented here is to draw attention to the insidious ways in which the Carnegie unit dominates our efforts to teach world languages and interferes with our task of causing the learning of languages to occur. Frankly, the discussion here is meant to cause discomfort, incite a level of anger, and prompt the complicated and frank discussions that must occur as we struggle to throw off the chains of an institutionally embedded structure that has become a primary reason we are not able to mount the sorts of reforms called for by Hoyt, Van Houten, and others.

*The Carnegie unit’s insistence on equating time with learning and achievement has doomed many of our best efforts to transform the system from one focused on inputs and the accumulation of credits to a system where student achievement on clearly articulated outcomes is the goal.*

If any conclusion is obvious after a careful reading of “Choices in Language Learning” (Hoyt & Van Houten, in press), it is the fact that change—significant, long-lasting, fundamental change of the type the authors advocate—can not be produced if we continue to stay bound to the current system. Hoyt and Van Houten identify the greatest obstacle to change in their first recommendation: the need for elimination of the Carnegie unit. For nearly a century (Shedd, 2005, p. 5), the Carnegie unit’s insistence on equating time with learning and achievement has doomed many of our best efforts to transform the system from one focused on inputs and the accumulation of credits to a system where student achievement on clearly articulated outcomes is the goal.

Bear with me for a simplistic metaphor. Let’s imagine that we tell a child that she is going to go through a series of lessons on kite-building. At the end of the first lesson, the child has not quite finished the frame. The instructor says, “You have finished 73% of the frame; now it is time to move on.” In the next lesson, choosing a material for the fabric of the kite, the child takes extra time to find a fabric that reflects her personality and character. Just as she starts a careful attempt to affix the second side to the incomplete frame, the instructor looks at his watch and says, “Time is up for this part. In the next lesson we are going to work on the tail! Besides, you completed 72% of the kite face.” If she says she is not finished, she is told that she can not just complete the remaining work at the beginning of the next class. She would have to start the entire lesson over, complete with instruction on fabric choice and how to fasten it to the frame. She complains that she already knows about fabric choice, has one chosen, and all she needs is a little more time to finish the work she has started. “Sorry, honey! Take it or leave it, because you will be in a class with boys and girls who have never been instructed about putting the material on the frame, and I can not have you doing something different from all the rest.” A bit angry, but still committed to finishing the kite, she moves on. Here her frustration is complete. She learns a bit about the equations involved in selecting the appropriate length of tail for a kite, but she did not finish the part of the frame where the tail is going to attach, and did not know she needed to save fabric from the kite face to use for the tail. Frustrated, she shreds some fabric meant for another project and attempts to pass it off as the tail for her kite. “Well,” the teacher says, “you have not included an adequate tail, but I know how much you want to fly a kite, so I will be generous since you have been through the rest of the lessons and record that you have 65% of what it takes for a tail.” The teacher even hands out a certificate and says “Congratulations, you have passed Kite-making I, II and III!” Kite flying day comes. No one should bother to feign surprise that the kite is useless. Yet this is what goes on time after time not only in language classrooms, but in every subject. We confuse time with expertise and then seem surprised that students are not successful.

Perpetuating this false notion that time is equal to learning or achievement has many detrimental effects. It thwarts the suggestions advocated by Hoyt and Van Houten (in press). For example, the first notion advanced by the

authors, namely the premise that language learning is for ALL students is an impossibility as long as we continue to let learning be bound to the Carnegie unit. The unfortunate truth is that we doom those traditionally left out of language classes to fail if we insist on progress measured at the same rate, according to hours per course. Recall the kite metaphor: if a student needs to take more time, or chooses to take more time to meet the expectations for certain standards, or demonstrate that certain lessons have been adequately learned, that student becomes a casualty of the status quo. The student either learns it well enough in a certain number of hours or fails. World languages have traditionally been elective courses in many schools and districts or have been required only for students following a pre-college curriculum. Those in the old world's traditional tracks were often steered away from the study of languages. The courses were foreign not just in name but in experience to a wide range of learners who found themselves at the bottom of the traditional academic barrel.

The expectation that the status quo could accommodate these nontraditional world language students alongside the college-bound and gifted students is a nightmare under the Carnegie unit system with its strict limit on the time available to help students reach established expectations. The options for the teacher would be to fail those who could not advance rapidly enough, attempt to recycle them until they finally eked out a passing grade, or be forced to go so slowly to meet the needs of those who were struggling that the achievement of any traditional measure of success in coverage of the material—an ugly goal in itself—became a dream from the distant past. While there is currently a great deal of discussion on differentiation in the classroom by Tomlinson and others (Tomlinson, 1999, 2003; Heacox, 2001), those practices are hard pressed to succeed in a system that assumes that students with widely varying degrees of background experience and innate ability can learn the same material at the same rate even if the curriculum is individualized and differentiated for the learner.

There is a second reason that world language learning as “an essential part of any and every student’s preparedness for today’s world” (Hoyt & Van Houten, in press) is a fool’s dream if we cannot break out of the box of the Carnegie unit. With world language teachers already in short supply, it is pointless to advocate something that literally could not be achieved in the present system. In many areas of the country, there simply are not enough “highly qualified” language teachers to offer every secondary student the benefits of world language learning within the structure to which we seem to be so securely bound. Add to that the hope of starting language learning in the elementary school and continuing through middle school, and the unrealistic nature of the notion becomes even more apparent. The noble goal espoused by Hoyt and Van Houten of inviting “the PK-20 population inclusive of all elementary students, middle schoolers, heritage language learners, students with disabilities, career professionals who see language for special purposes, vocational and technical school students, adult learners, and so on” (in press)

to learn languages is a pipe dream if we believe it can be accomplished by just doing a better, more thorough version of what we currently do. It cannot happen; there are not enough teachers qualified or even certified to achieve this goal if we continue with the Carnegie unit and the current structure set up to accommodate it.

Before we bend our efforts to the pursuit of language learning for all, we might be better served by beginning the discussions on how we can accomplish such a task. Initially, the profession must progress to the next step in a standards-based approach, namely from a standards-informed orientation to a standards-based and proficiency-based progression or articulation model. In order for this to occur, the profession will need to articulate a set of clearly defined proficiency and performance standards that are used to describe student progress or benchmarks in the language. A great deal of background work along these lines has been accomplished in the past two decades as attested to by the publication of the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines in 1986 (ACTFL), and the national student standards in 1996 (National Standards). Because of our inability to get beyond credentialing time rather than performance, we have closed ourselves off from innovative ways to make the transition from standards-informed to proficiency-based progress and articulation.

***Even if the teacher is using standards to determine the content and focus for the class, it is rare indeed that students progress to the next level only when they have met the standards at the established level.***

We must also open up the discussion about the consequences of continuing to focus on language teaching rather than language learning. I mean specifically that we currently focus on a “class,” be it German II, Spanish III, French I, or any other similar label. The teacher focuses on teaching that class and then assesses student progress against what are usually independently established teacher goals for the class. Even if the teacher is using standards to determine the content and focus for the class, it is rare indeed that students progress to the next level only when they have met the standards at the established level. We do not let students advance early if they meet the standards *before* the course is “finished,” and we do not keep them *until* they have met the standards if they are taking longer to learn. Remember the kite flying metaphor. It is no wonder that only the best and the brightest students are allowed, officially or unofficially, to continue on to the next course based solely on their enrollment in the class for a certain length of time, rather than on their demonstration of achievement of a set of standards.

This has a progressive measure of difficulty built into it when it comes to articulation. Because students are advanced to the next level after having served the time allotted (rather like some sort of twisted court-imposed sentence),

teachers at subsequent levels are faced with students in the same class who have been allowed to enter the course with a wide variety of knowledge, skills, and overall proficiencies. Then the process is started over again in the new course: the teacher takes this winnowed group and sees how well they do at meeting the standards for the next “x” number of days. What an insane way to construct learning! The adoption of a true standards-based approach would also resolve the articulation issue because students would progress as they demonstrate their readiness, not when an arbitrary number of days or hours in class had passed.

***Set achievement of clearly defined standards as the focus, define the assessments that will demonstrate that learning, and credential the achievement rather than the length of time a student spends in instruction.***

In a standards-based approach, the focus is on student learning and achievement, not on success over a limited number of days in a teacher-dependent environment. In a standards-based approach, with student learning as the variable rather than time, the goals of Hoyt and Van Houten’s new world paradigm have a much greater chance for success. The varied student goals can be more readily accommodated as students pursue their language acquisition through the lens of personal interest. If we set achievement of clearly defined standards as the focus, define the assessments that will demonstrate that learning, and credential the achievement rather than the length of time a student spends in instruction, then students also have the opportunity to achieve those standards through learning experiences that may or may not be dependent on the school or the teacher. Travel and study abroad, Web-enabled or Web-enhanced courses, private tutoring, and independent study of any type all become legitimate and legitimized modes of students’ learning. Why should we care how a student learns if we can validate that learning when measured against the achievement of clearly articulated standards?

Asking that question opens up a host of more complex questions revolving around the fact that the Carnegie unit permeates every aspect of most public secondary schools. If the emphasis shifts from teaching to learning, then there are immediate and difficult issues that arise concerning the financial implications of abandoning the Carnegie unit. This opens up the Pandora’s box of accounting for teacher time and scheduling courses. It might be helpful to keep in mind that the Carnegie unit was originally conceived as a way to figure out compensation packages for university faculty after “Andrew Carnegie donated \$10 million for retirement pensions for college teachers” (Shedd, 2003, p. 7). However, the fact that these very real and difficult issues would result can not be taken as a reason to shrink back from the courage needed. We must face these issues in order to abandon a system that focuses on teaching

and thus transition to a system that focuses on what each individual student learns and is able to do.

But the question remains: How do we design a workable environment for a standards-based world languages approach and still meet the demands of operating within the system? One of the first steps is to establish the standards benchmarks. In other words, what levels of proficiency are required for progress? One does not have to look far to see how inadequate the status quo is in this regard. Across the nation students meet a pre-college curriculum requirement of a certain number of credits in a second language but find that meeting that requirement might be of dubious value for continuing with language study in the postsecondary environment.

Remediation rates for incoming freshmen who have met pre-college curriculum requirements are probably one of the best kept “dirty secrets” in the profession. An informal 2004 survey at one Kentucky university found that over 70% of Spanish students and over 90% of French students who met the pre-college curriculum of two years of the same language had to be placed into the 101 level when they took the college placement test. Of course, there are myriad explanations that we can offer up for this, including the number of false novices generated by students who purposely did poorly or the lapse of time for students who may have met the requirement as a high school sophomore or junior. But the economic impact of this one example is staggering if the costs of remediation for those students are calculated. If those 1100 students have to enroll for two courses at that institution at the current rate of \$70 per semester hour, and three hours per course, that adds up to over \$460,000. The tragic thing is that we would be surprised by such an occurrence.

While it is very true that the plural of anecdote is not data, and the placement results at one Kentucky university can not necessarily be extrapolated on a large scale, it would be interesting to compile such figures. Of course, part of the problem for secondary students taking placement tests as they begin postsecondary work is that the difficulty and the focus of the placement exams can vary widely among institutions. Type in “College placement tests in foreign languages” in a Google search and over 379,000 responses will come back. In the absence of clear standards for achievement, who would be surprised to discover that the same student might take placement exams at several different institutions and be placed into different language levels according to the results of the different placement policies?

A second step is to shift the focus from teaching classes to helping student learning occur. One way to accomplish this is to require students to meet certain standards in order to progress to the next level. How they do this, and how quickly they do this, is up to the individual student. There are ways to facilitate this and ways to organize it, even in the confines of the present school day. There are no easy answers, but some examples of early solutions exist. One such early example is found in Kentucky. In December 1999, the Kentucky Board of Education approved guidelines for obtaining approval from the Kentucky Board of Education for performance-based credits. That

made it theoretically possible for students to earn a performance-based credit in any course. On the transcript, it still appears as Spanish I, or biology, but the credit can be awarded when standards have been demonstrated and met, not necessarily when time has been put in. Of course, one of the difficulties is to figure out what to do with the student who finishes a course a month early or two months late. At least one Kentucky school, East Jessamine High School, has groups of students who “loop” with content teachers for more than one year. When a student finishes one course, he or she continues the next day with the same teacher at the same time, but progressing to the next level of instruction and learning. Currently being used in mathematics, English, science, and social studies, plans are underway at the school for awarding performance-based credits in Spanish. Work is also underway at the Kentucky Department of Education on a performance-based Spanish course that students could use to meet pre-college curriculum requirements.

A third necessary element in this move is to approach the shift with an understanding of the unbelievable difficulty and effort necessary for such a transition. There must be an up-front acceptance of the notion that early attempts will be like early versions of software, complete with bugs and crashes. We need to undertake this complex, messy work knowing that each iteration of the attempt will include learning from difficulties encountered in earlier attempts. Thank goodness for the courageous developers and software engineers willing to bring out version 1.0 of a product, because glitches and all, we would never have version 7.3.1 if there hadn't been a version 1.0 before it. As a profession we need to be encouraging and supporting these learning engineers in their classrooms, their publications, and their attempts to usher in the change that is so desperately needed. The new world described by Hoyt and Van Houten (in press) will be beyond our reach if we lack the courage to tackle the problems inherent with the Carnegie unit.

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## **Section 5**

### **Celebrations of Language Learning**

#### **The Power of Languages: Why We Learn Them**

Helene Zimmer-Loew



# The Power of Languages: Why We Learn Them

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**Helene Zimmer-Loew**

American Association of Teachers of German

**W**hy learn other languages? No doubt, readers of this volume can answer this question without hesitation. Your replies will vary depending on your personal and professional perspectives as well as your experiences with languages other than English and the cultural awareness that goes hand in hand with the study of another language. More important, however, are the perspectives of your diverse audiences, be they students, parents, administrators, superintendents, fellow faculty members, school board members, deans, provosts, institution presidents, taxpayers, local clubs, civic associations, the press, government agencies, and the list goes on.

For centuries, language study has been one of the major goals of a liberal education, a goal that has been eroded over the past few decades. At this time, not everyone in those audiences believes as we do that proficiency in more than one language benefits individuals and the country as a whole. In fact, most language educators find themselves defending their programs at one time or another. And if we are to celebrate language learning in the coming decade and beyond, we want more Americans to understand why this nation needs more people who have skills in a variety of languages and cultural awareness and knowledge of their speakers. We want all Americans to celebrate with us and hence we must be prepared to advocate for languages.

Over 8 million students in the United States are studying over 175 languages, commonly taught as well as less commonly taught in our schools, colleges, and universities, according to the most recent surveys. However, these statistics (Welles, 2004; Draper & Hicks, 2002; Branaman & Rhodes, 1999) show that only 9% of college university students, 43.8 % of students in grades 7-12, and 6% of U. S. students in grades 1-6 study any language at a given point in time. Our challenge is to convince this large pool of uncommitted potential students of the value of language study during the Year of Languages and the decade beyond.

## **So why learn other languages? Because of an increasing number of heritage languages and cultures represented in our country**

As the 21<sup>st</sup> century moves into its first decade, data show that the United States is rich with a population who speaks dozens of languages and represents an exciting linguistic and cultural diversity. The 2000 census (U.S.

Census Bureau, 2003; Modern Language Association, 2004) identified that over 47 million people, almost 18 percent of our population over the age of five, speak a language other than English at home. The most frequently mentioned languages were Spanish (28,101,052), Chinese (2,022,143), French including Patois and Cajun (1,643,838), German (1,383,442), Tagalog (1,224,241), Vietnamese (1,009,627), and Italian (1,008,370).

These immigrants are important resources to be recognized, cherished, and encouraged to continue the development of their skills and knowledge for themselves, their families, their communities, their professions, and for this country. Learning other people's languages is one way of helping us as Americans to understand one another better and to overcome cultural differences. Retaining one's mother tongue is equally important and should be encouraged and supported at all levels of society. As Joshua Fishman (2004), distinguished professor at Yeshiva University, stated recently:

The goal of promoting heritage language proficiency will revitalize our entire approach to non-English language instruction. It will not only give us more individuals proficient in these languages, it will also dignify our country's heritage language communities. . . . It will help connect instruction with business and governmental needs for expertise in the languages involved. (p. 9)

There are at this time an especially large number of newly arrived immigrants with Spanish as their mother tongue. Julia Alvarez (personal communication, 2003), author of *In the Time of the Butterflies*, expresses the importance of learning the language of this important group of new Americans:

Why not learn at least one other language of the Americas? After all, we're Americans, part of a hemispheric *familia* we should get to know. And since by the year 2050, twenty-five percent of United States Americans will be Latinos, many of whom speak Spanish, they will be part of our family. They will be us! . . . In fact, the best peace work in the world is learning someone else's language because in doing so, you begin to understand a whole different way of putting the world together and naming it. Not only that, you're able to communicate with those "foreign" others and realize that though languages differ, the human heart speaks the same native tongue everywhere. When you learn someone else's language, you knit human family closer together.

Frederica S. Brenneman (personal communication, 2003), judge trial referee for the State of Connecticut, also supports the need for recognition of our immigrants:

In a new century with technology weaving the planet Earth into one global village, it is more important than ever that Americans learn languages other than English to promote friendships abroad and show that we are not the go-it-alone bullies that too many nations perceive us to be. We respect immigrants who take the trouble to become fluent in English; we owe them no less than to become fluent in their languages so that we can easily exchange our thoughts, ideas and hopes for a peaceful future.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **[Nuestra Noche – A Community Celebration**

Lorraine D'Ambruoso

California Language Teachers Association

*From tiny seeds come great trees. The idea for Nuestra Noche started as a seed of an idea planted by Armando Yanez, then a junior, and Martha Escobedo, teacher of Spanish and Spanish for Heritage Speakers and Advisor to the LSU (Latino Student Union). Their idea was to host a festival celebrating Mt Pleasant's Latino community, educating the members of that community in the resources available to them and encouraging participation by a broad spectrum of that community. In 2001, Nuestra Noche was extended to include all of the minority populations at Mt Pleasant High School, including the East Indian Club, the Chinese-Vietnamese Club, and the African-American Student Union. Now in its seventh year and with continued support by students, faculty, parents, administrators, and community leaders, the evening celebrates the diversity that makes the Mt Pleasant community so dynamic.*

*Nuestra Noche has something for everyone. The event begins with a celebration of the cuisines of the various ethnic groups at the school. Students and parents participate to prepare the dishes that are sold to raise money for scholarships.*

*After the food sales, there are booths that represent many of the organizations that provide services to the community. From a wide range of community organizations, representatives communicate with the parents so they can learn where to register for English classes, how to work with bilingual realtors to obtain mortgages, how to obtain legal aid for immigration issues, and where to obtain health insurance. They can also learn how to help their children, with representatives from Educare (helping students with math and science so they are prepared for calculus classes), help with job training*

and preparation to access post-secondary education. Organizations such as the Red Cross and the YWCA also participate. Finally, in an effort to communicate the variety of programs available to students, there are booths featuring all of the special programs at the school.

After the education and communication portion of *Nuestra Noche* comes the celebration of the students' talents. Although the emphasis is on student talent, there are also performances by professional groups such as Aztec and folklórico dance groups. The audience sees Eastern Asian, Chinese, and Vietnamese dances; skits and comic sketches in various languages; plus poetry recitations, songs, and dances—and not all in English! Last year's host was a Vietnamese student, and one of the skits featured a Vietnamese student performing in Spanish.

*Nuestra Noche* has become a part of the cultural landscape at Mt Pleasant High School. The sponsors earn enough to award from six to ten scholarships up to \$500 each year to students participating in the program. I can think of no single activity that does so much exemplify the Year of Languages theme of "Celebrate, Educate, Communicate."

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### **Why learn other languages? Because of the needs of U.S. business and industry**

Globalization and internationalization of business and industry mean that people need world language skills to work effectively here and abroad. The competitive advantage that foreign language skills and cultural knowledge give Americans who work abroad is demonstrated by the following quotations from several graduates of the Garvin School of International Management at Thunderbird and compiled by Christine Uber Grosse (2004). Today they are employees of foreign and American companies here and abroad.

- Language and cultural skills are mandatory for local acceptance and setting one apart in a foreign setting. Those that do not make an attempt to learn the language are looked down upon not only by the locals but also by the expatriate community that has taken the time to learn the language and with it, the culture. (p. 356)
- At senior international levels, English is spoken by everyone, but the knowledge of a second language—especially by an American—adds credibility when working at the international level. (p. 366)
- It will be next to impossible in the next decade to use the opportunities arising in markets such as China without thorough preparation and immersion in the language and

culture. (p. 365)

- While I do not use a foreign language to communicate at work, knowing another language and culture has helped me to communicate with people of various cultures, nationalities, and even disparate scientific disciplines at work, which I do on a daily basis. (p. 366)
- Cultural understanding, and the enhanced cultural understanding that language studies provide, is vital to success in the international business community. (p. 359)
- Language skills and the ability to adjust to multiple cultures raise the level of effectiveness significantly. It becomes much easier to “get things done,” and lowers the stress level associated with being an expatriate to manageable proportions. (p. 356)

Erik Gaston (personal communication, 2003), an American working as assistant vice president of PWM Controlling for Deutsche Bank in New York, observes:

For the past eight years, I have worked in German companies in various financial capacities. My German language skills have added value to me in the job market and have allowed me the freedom to explore different industries and see the world. With the ever-changing face of the global marketplace, knowing and understanding languages and cultures are as vital to business as accounting, finance, and economics. I encourage anyone with an interest in global business to learn German, as there is a great future in the global marketplace with German language skills.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **What Shall I Celebrate This Year of Languages?**

Roslyn M. Terek  
Struthers City School District (OH)

*The Year of Languages is here; I am a language teacher, and so I should celebrate. But, what should I celebrate? Perhaps I should celebrate what all language teachers must celebrate during this year: It is what we have known all along. It is why we do what we do. It is who we are. The celebration might be for the long-awaited acknowledgement by so many others that it is important for Americans to study a language other than English. But I think I shall celebrate some other things as well. First, I shall celebrate my family for giving me three languages to speak as a child and the desire to make languages my life. Second, I shall celebrate something that*

*my colleagues and I know so well. I shall celebrate my students. I cannot forget those whose lives I have touched, those whose careers I have influenced, those for whom I sing and dance and hope. And last, I shall celebrate my teachers and my colleagues, both current and past. They have influenced, helped, encouraged, and supported me throughout my career. My family, my students, my teachers, and my colleagues are what I choose to celebrate this year.*

*I was brought up in a home where three languages were spoken. Three of my grandparents came to this country almost 100 years ago. They brought with them ideas, values, traditions, and perspectives that I grew up to cherish. My home was filled with sounds of Slovak, Ukrainian, and English. I spoke very little Ukrainian and Slovak, but I understood these languages when my parents and grandparents would talk. My grandparents and my father are no longer here, but their spirit lingers on in the traditions and values their children and grandchildren continue today. At Christmas, my mom and I still sing the Ukrainian Christmas carols that we remember and that help us to remember those years gone by.*

*When I was quite young, I felt somewhat embarrassed by the fact that my family spoke different languages. I didn't completely understand until I was older why we did certain things the same way year after year at holidays. I didn't really know why we ate certain foods. After all, only a few of my friends were eating the same things. What my family and I were doing seemed different from what everyone else was doing, at least to me. And I clearly felt that I was different from all the other students in school. I was too young then and too naïve to know how blessed I was. This year I celebrate my family, their languages, their traditions, their values and their beliefs. I see now how similar we are to all people, but as a child I saw only the differences. I shall celebrate my family this Year of Languages.*

*Now I am much older, and I like to think I am a little wiser than I was as a child. I have always told my family's story about languages to my students; I have tried to make them realize the richness that languages and the understanding of other cultures can bring to their lives. And as I reflect on my career of teaching French at the high school level, I am struck by the enormity of the sheer number of students I have encountered. Often in the past, I have thought about these students, their lives, their careers, their dreams. I have wondered what has become of them, where they have gone, what they are doing now.*

*It is clear to me that I remember each of them coming into my classroom for reasons as unique as each one of them is different from the others. Some came because they wanted to pursue their education at the university. Some came because they dreamed of traveling to France some day. Others came because they were required to study*

*a language. And, on occasion, there would be the student who was there because he loved French as much as I. Most often, however, it was simply that I would stand before my classes hoping to spark within the minds of my students the same passion for language that I have had for longer than I can remember. And often I would wonder, were any of them getting it?*

*What did I want them to get? This year, for one of their weekly journal topics, I asked my French 4 class to discuss the importance of studying a foreign language. The results of my query amazed me. My students discussed that technology has allowed nations and people to communicate easily on a daily basis and that studying another language and its culture helps to eliminate prejudice and xenophobia. They mentioned that they feel better-rounded as students from their study of a foreign language. All of them said that their understanding of English grammar has been enhanced. More career options with better salaries are possible for them. They stated that because our country has many cultures and many languages within its borders that the study of a foreign language and its culture can help to prevent problems or conflicts not only locally but also globally.*

*Their answers also included the fact that they now have a better appreciation of both the U.S. and other countries. The study of a language has also given them a clearer picture of historical events that they did not understand before. They also mentioned that international trade as well as travel to distant locales for either career or recreation is now more feasible to them. Promoting friendship, helping to keep peace, and making the future better were other key points they mentioned. What surprised me was that each of them was able to discuss several reasons why the study of a foreign language is important. I think they are getting it. Yes, I shall celebrate my students this Year of Languages.*

*The last of my celebrations this year will be the celebration of my teachers and my colleagues. How clearly I remember them all. They are the ones who helped me to reach my goal. Their support, influence, and encouragement came easily. We laughed a lot, we worked hard, and we grew professionally together. We did this because we knew what we were doing was important. We did this, too, because we were passionate about our discipline. Language study for us meant everything.*

*Yes, that is it. I shall celebrate them all this Year of Languages: my family, my students, and my colleagues.*

\* \* \* \* \*

**Why learn other languages? Because your English and your critical thinking skills will improve**

According to a College Board (2003) study reported in an ERIC/CLL News Bulletin, students who study a world language for four or more years score higher on the verbal and math sections of the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) than students who do not. Or as Timothy Reagan (2004), dean of the School of Education, Roger Williams University, writes:

The formal study of a language provides students with a metalanguage for discussing the characteristics and components of any language including their native language. It is not unusual for an individual to claim that they never really understood “grammar” and grammatical relations until they studied a second language. . . . There are also subtle differences in the way different languages construct reality, and language study can help students understand issues of power, domination and subordination related to language.

Fred Rogers (personal communication, October 1999), creator of Mr. Roger’s Neighborhood, shared in response to a high school student’s letter his personal experience learning languages:

During high school, I studied Latin for three years, and it was a wonderful foundation for me for building my English vocabulary and for learning others like French and Spanish. I’ve always been interested in finding new ways to communicate about ideas and feelings and that’s another reason I’ve appreciated learning Latin, French, and other languages.

And as Liz Kelly (Department of German, Scandinavian, and Dutch, 2004), a former German student from the University of Minnesota and now with the international executive services department of a major accounting firm, states:

A German major is my way to become a more well-rounded person and to distinguish myself from other business students. In business, you have to be able to research something, get your point across, and be concise. My writing ability has really improved because of all the papers I wrote for German classes.

Graduates from the Garvin School at Thunderbird (Grosse, 2004) support this rationale as well:

Learning a foreign language is extremely helpful to learning further languages as it changes or trains one's mind set to be more open and flexible. (p. 363)

Foreign language skills are more than understanding another language; they train the mind to deal with imprecise and often vague communications and information. (p. 363)

### **Why learn other languages? To support U.S. political, military, and security interests**

The needs of the United States government have grown enormously in the past few years. A recent joint statement by several associations representing higher education institutions (Joint Statement, 2001) states that more than 80 agencies of the federal government rely on people with intermediate to high level competence in foreign languages. Testimony before Senate and House Committees by David Alba (2000), director of Investigative Services Divisions, Federal Bureau of Investigation, has identified a number of urgent needs in the government sector to support this rationale for learning languages:

Every piece of foreign language material could be the key to solving the next big international drug case or stopping a terrorist plot. . . . With the growing demand for certain languages, the work continues to back up. When we're talking about critical national security-related investigations, the implications are sobering. (p. 2)

Glenn H. Nordin, (2004), assistant director of Intelligence Policy (Language and Training), Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense, also endorses this need for competence in language and cultures:

With missions including peacekeeping, humanitarian aid, nation-building, and training of foreign military personnel, more than 40,000 U. S. troops are or have been stationed in more than 140 nations (excluding NATO and Japan) since 1991, including every nation in Latin America, all but two of the fifteen successor states to the USSR, some forty nations in Africa, and throughout South and Southeast Asia. More than 140 languages are spoken in these nations. (p. 1)

And Paul Wolfowitz (U.S. Department of Defense, 2004), Deputy Secretary of Defense, recently stated:

The greater our ability to communicate with people, the easier the burden on our troops and the greater the likelihood that we can complete our missions and bring our people

home safely. Even better, the greater our linguistic skill, the greater the possibility that we can resolve international differences and achieve our objectives without having to use force. (p. 1)

From Rush Holt (U.S. Department of Defense, 2004), a member of the House of Representatives from New Jersey, comes an historical perspective on America's response to past crises:

In 1958, Congress responded to Sputnik by passing the National Defense Education Act (NDEA), which created a generation of scientists, engineers, and Russian linguists who helped win the Cold War. Immediately after September 11, 2001, Americans found themselves again facing a Sputnik moment. They realized that they were caught flat-footed, unprepared to confront the Al Qaeda terrorists. We need a national commitment to languages on a scale of the NDEA commitment to science, including improved curriculum, teaching technology and methods, teacher development, and systemic cultural commitment.

Former Secretary of State Madeline Korbelt Albright (2000) writes that her personal and professional experiences have been enhanced by her knowledge of other languages and cultures:

My own life has convinced me of the value of language study. . . . Language skills do open all kinds of doors in one's personal and professional life, especially today, as advances in travel, trade, and communications technology present more and more possibilities to experience other cultures.

I believe that my ability to speak Russian was definitely an asset in building my relationship with the Russian Foreign Minister and President Yeltsin. I believe that others sense your respect for them and your honest desire for mutually beneficial results when you have taken the time to try to better understand them and their culture by learning their language.

Beyond opening doors to friendship and cultural exchange, language skills make possible new employment opportunities, bold enterprises in business, improved cooperation in humanitarian endeavors, and better understanding on crucial security and political issues. In today's world it is never too early to begin learning another language – and never too late. (pp. 3-4)

And finally, from the 16<sup>th</sup> century scholar and philosopher Erasmus in 1529:

It is through ignorance of languages that the world of learning fell on evil days and even came close to extinction.

**Why learn other languages? Because of the success factor, that competitive edge in college and careers**

Credit hours in a world language on student transcripts and resumes demonstrate to a college admissions person or a potential employer that the applicants have a value-added dimension to their credentials. The applicants themselves often realize the immediate benefit of language study. As Jessie Walters (personal communication, 2004) states:

German is more important than most think. I know it got me where I am today. In the fall I'll be attending Tufts University to major in International Relations. I know a key factor in my acceptance was German. It made me stand out in the competitive college application process. The German program also stresses an understanding of culture which I believe is an extremely important lesson in our increasingly globalized world no matter what path a student decides to take.

Sara Vogt (Department of German, Scandinavian, and Dutch, 2004), PhD candidate in disability studies, now understands the connection between language study and another field of study:

I never imagined that I would combine German with disability studies... I realize now that even if you are in a natural science program in grad school, you benefit from having had a liberal arts perspective. In German studies, I was taught to question what I read and to challenge interpretations. That's been endlessly helpful in my ability to analyze other texts.

Thunderbird graduates (Grosse, 2004) express more reasons for the importance of language study:

Having specialized in consumer marketing, it is absolutely absurd to believe that one can competently lead or consult without an in-depth understanding of the language and culture in which communications are being crafted. (p. 366) Without a foreign language it would have been almost impossible for me to start a career on continental Europe. .

. . . The ability to speak three languages is very uncommon for an American, but not so in other countries. (p. 360)

Speaking Spanish and studying and living in Latin America have made my chances of business success increase by 50%. In Latin America, it is a relationship-based business environment. (p. 361)

I studied Arabic. I waived the language requirement because of fluency in French and Italian. I know that my language skills helped me in job interviews with banks and getting me a higher salary. (p. 361)

The decision to study Japanese profoundly changed my life, creating invaluable opportunities both commercially and socially. (p.362)

Speaking more than one language is a must in today's world, regardless of origin or field of endeavor. (p. 362)

Eric Amann (Department of German, Scandinavian, and Dutch, 2004), project manager for 3M EPSE Dental Products, expresses a major corporation's need for language skills:

Over half of 3M's sales come from outside the U.S. Employees at its St. Paul headquarters and elsewhere in the world need to have a global mindset and perspective so that everything we do, from developing and marketing products to creating internal procedures and processes, is maximizing global impact. Knowledge of foreign languages and cultures fosters that global mindset.

Christa Tiefenbacher-Hudson (Department of German, Scandinavian, and Dutch, 2004), president of the German-American Chamber of Commerce, Minnesota Chapter, sees the value of language skills and cultural understanding with business contacts:

Whoever masters the language of the business partner is at an advantage. Through the study of German, you learn about another culture and point of view and gain better insight into your business partner's actions and thoughts. Perhaps, most important, is that it shows respect to the business partner. If you do not show respect for other cultures, you run the risk of portraying arrogance.

And actor Bill Cosby (personal communication, 2000) wrote to students at Morgan High School in Ohio:

If you know two languages, the level of your intelligence is multiplied a hundred fold in other people's eyes.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Why Celebrate a Year of Languages?**

Paul Sandrock

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

*Nothing convinces me more of why we need to put forth the effort to celebrate a Year of Languages than receiving a letter from a former student. Hearing the voice, not of the “perfect” student, but of one who struggled, makes the difficult work of advocating for more language instruction for more students worth the effort. In my Spanish class he was Jaimelito. He recently wrote me, 15 years after graduating from high school. I share my translation of what he wrote in Spanish:*

*As a kid, I didn't know many Spanish-speakers when I lived in Appleton [Wisconsin], but when I met one, I didn't waste time taking advantage of the opportunity to chat in Spanish. For some reason, I had an aptitude for language, and I loved to practice and chat. But although I was one of the best Spanish speakers in high school, I was not a very good student. After three years at a university, I dropped out and went to look for adventure. Through the years, my ability to speak Spanish has helped me a lot. I was able to get work when others couldn't get anything, and in my jobs they generally paid me more for being bilingual. I covered much of the West and northern Mexico during my 20s and in the process met many Latinos and improved my Spanish. Later, working as a cook and head chef in Minnesota, I came to realize how difficult it is to survive in the U.S. without speaking two languages. I returned to the university, completed my degree, and today I am a teacher. I also want to thank you for being patient with me and for helping me become bilingual. It is better that you receive my thanks late rather than never.*

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Why learn other languages? For fun and personal satisfaction**

Learning another language and the cultures of its speakers helps to expand horizons and is a source of personal pride and enrichment as well as pleasure, as these quotes from several Thunderbird graduates indicate (Grosse, 2004):

Foreign languages are a labor of love, and what they can return to someone is priceless. (p.363)

While I value this knowledge in my business life, I feel that the study of language has added an incredible richness to all facets of my life. There is so much of the world's beauty that I would miss without even knowing, had I not studied language from an early age. It literally opened up entire new worlds for me. (p.363)

Knowing another language is equal to gaining another soul in the richness and depth it adds to my life. (p.363)

This Czech proverb synthesizes the above endorsements:

He who learns another language gains another soul.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **A Journey to Francophonie**

Marion Kuster

*Emerita*, Green Lake School District (WI)

*"He who learns another language gains another soul." I kept that old Czech saying on a sign over my classroom door when I was a seventh-grade classroom teacher. Later, as a K-12 gifted/talented coordinator, I encouraged language learning in every way I could divine, including instituting a three-week home-stay exchange with French fifth-graders. Sadly, however, I remained monolingual.*

*It's the old story. My first year in high school Spanish, I had the great teacher, and I loved it. I sent for information from the University of Mexico: the Spanish language would be my future. The second year, I had the other Spanish teacher: Endless conjugation and very little else occurred in that class. Utilizing the wisdom of my seventeen years, I decided that instead of majoring in Spanish in college, I would just go to live in Spain after graduation. A good plan, perhaps, but life intervened. Marriage and the arrival of two sons after two years of elementary teaching became my priorities.*

*I was able, however, to see that both of our boys attended a school in which language instruction began in fifth grade. One chose Spanish, the other chose French. One was fairly disinterested;. The other became totally enamored and spent his senior high school year in France as an AFS exchange student. After college, he was a*

*Peace Corps volunteer in Guinea. A year in Washington, DC, and he was off to Romania as administrator of the Doctors Without Borders program there, all the while perfecting his French. By the time he finished grad school, married, and had two sons born in Brussels, I began to think that Grandma should get with the program. So I made the big switch to “Someday I’m going to learn French” instead of “Someday I’m going to learn Spanish.”*

*Meanwhile, our family had enjoyed traveling in Europe and the French Caribbean, and I had taken twenty-two eleven-year-olds for a three-week stay in a Parisian suburb. Still, I could only utter a little fractured French.*

*I then “retired” for the first time when my husband and I moved temporarily to Chicago. We began to take classes at the Alliance Française with people from all walks sharing their strong desire to learn French. We would all learn, laugh, and then go to dinner at a different French restaurant each week.*

*Upon returning to Wisconsin, I asked my friend, a professor at Ripon College, if I could audit her class. “Of course,” she said, and so began my joyful adventure. The classes have been riveting and the students kind to me, definitely a non-traditional student. I’m not proud; I expected to, and did, make lots of mistakes.*

*Meanwhile, my local Green Lake School District had an heroic high-school French teacher, who had stirred up a lot of enthusiasm for early language learning. At a school board meeting, I spoke in favor of implementing a program beginning in kindergarten. When a board member asked for implementation details, I suggested a two-year pilot program, knowing that parents would never let it be dropped once their little ones came home chattering in another language. So now, even four-year-old pre-schoolers are “bonjouring” and “au revoiring” their way down the halls, full of smiles.*

*As French moved up the grades, the Green Lake school needed someone for three mornings a week to teach French students in grades K-2. I said I could help out for a year, so I attended workshops, read, observed, read some more, invented dances, conferred with classroom teachers, and planned units. It was a delightful year. I found that the second-grade boys were happy to describe their actions in French if it meant that they could hammer a tack or turn a screwdriver during our unit on tools. All the classes were excited about Café La Grenouille as they role-played the parts of waiters, customers, and chefs. Classroom teachers would point out how much the students were picking up, and most felt that their struggling students were able to shine in the Total Physical Response environment of French class. They are such able language learners. When I see these students around town now, I must speak in French only; they still think I don’t speak English because of the immersion method we employed.*

*During four recent school years, I have met weekly with 20 or 30 fifth graders to prepare them for hosting a French exchange student for three weeks in May. With the families and principal, we plan activities and trips for our visitors. In June, I would take from 3 to 15 Green Lake students to France. By now, when visiting doctors in France with sick children or arranging schedules with parents, I was able to speak the language well enough to get the job done, but it wasn't anything like the elegant French I aspire to. I do find the French to be so delighted to encounter an American trying to learn their language. They are unduly complimentary, but every little bit of encouragement helps. My French hosts consider me slightly demented for taking on the responsibility for eleven-year-olds so far from home. I'm sold, though, because it's like learning on steroids—the parents are just amazed at the growth and maturation their children experience. Many of the Wisconsin students have decided that they want to become at least bilingual, if not trilingual. Lots of French and Wisconsin families are still in contact, with a surprising number planning visits back and forth. I enjoy running into parents who will tell me about the latest e-mail from their child's electronic pen pal or the students asking about the grams in a recipe just received from France.*

*So I'll be journeying toward Francophonie for the foreseeable future, and after that there's Arabic or Chinese. The great thing about a language or an atlas is that there's always more to learn. "He who learns another language gains another soul." I can't be sure about another soul, but certainly I have gained enrichment, excitement, contentment, and friendships, and the journey continues.*

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Why learn other languages? For life-enriching experiences by exploring other cultures here and abroad**

The advantages of study abroad include increased self-confidence, better understanding of other cultural values and biases as well as one's own, and improved language skills. Study abroad is often a defining moment in the life of a person, especially a young person. These experiences often result in lifelong friendships plus the development of better informed and aware world citizens, as several U.S. students of Chinese that traveled to China attested, reported in a Chinese newspaper (China Trip Goals, 2004):

I had climbed the Great Wall of China. There is truly nothing like it that I have seen or experienced in my life and this experience made me seem like a new person as I climbed down to the main square.

I noticed the unique architecture and interesting kinds of

native plants. The scenery and power of the new land helped bring the experience of China together for me.

The student was sitting in the lobby and so we talked. . . . I heard the Chinese opinion on many things in my country, and many things in his country as well. To know what someone of a completely different background thinks about the things you know is refreshing, to say the least.

Molly Schaffner (Hunt, 2004) who recently studied and traveled in Spain states:

It was so interesting talking to Spaniards and hearing their stories, whether a family member from my home stay, a Spanish friend, some person working in a shop or even students in our group. I gained a wider perspective on people from around the world.

Eliza Leavitt (Hunt, 2004) reviews her summer abroad:

Looking back on this summer I have an overwhelming number of happy memories. The people of Dominica gave me the gift of their island. I gained a higher confidence as a person. I have forever been affected by their beliefs and lifestyles, and I will always consider Dominica a part of who I am.

Swanee Hunt (2004), former U.S. ambassador to Austria and lecturer at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, writes:

Here's my advice for a new year: Get out of your comfort zone. . . . Savor nuances of a different culture. Struggle with the grammar of a new language. Stay awake all night after an eye-opening experience. Go abroad. Come home a better American.

Learning another language means exploring another culture and building bridges to new contacts, be they clients, acquaintances, or friends. Chad Thomas (Department of German, Scandinavian, and Dutch, 2004), TV news producer, discovered new perspectives from his experience abroad:

My international experiences are beneficial to me as a journalist and to the people I serve, because through my reporting, I can share new perspectives about what it's like to live someplace else.

### **Celebrate!**

We can celebrate the fact that the rationales for language study are many and varied with at least one appropriate reason for everyone in our diverse

American constituencies. Let's encourage lifelong learning in response to the fast moving economic, social, political and cultural changes. Let's emphasize the importance of language and cultural knowledge to personal fulfillment and productive use of leisure time or for their professional advancement.

There have never been more opportunities than there are today to learn another language and to work or study in different countries. However, a lack of language and cultural proficiency prevents many people from taking advantage of these opportunities. After decades of neglect, we language educators have an opportunity during this Year of Languages and beyond to make our case and place languages and their cultures in the forefront of education.

Let's celebrate the power of language in these statements by a diverse group of people strongly endorsing what we do and what we believe.

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