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Feature Article: April 2010

### Bilingualism and the Deficit-Gifted Dichotomy: Challenging the U.S. Framework

by Dr. Tatyana Kleyn, City College of New York

Dr. Tatyana Kleyn is an assistant professor at the City College of New York in the Bilingual Education and TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) program. She received an Ed.D. from Columbia University's Teachers College, Department of International and Transcultural Studies. Her dissertation research focused on bilingual and multicultural education in Spanish, Haitian Creole, Chinese, and Russian bilingual classrooms. Dr. Kleyn most recently co-authored the book, [Teaching in Two Languages: A Guide for K-12 Bilingual Educators](#).

The world is becoming increasingly interconnected, as traditional ethnic and cultural boundaries and geographical borders breakdown. Multidirectional flows of ideas, people and money have changed the way we need to prepare students for our globalizing society (Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008). No longer is it enough to think in monocultural ways and to speak only English. The changing landscape calls for a rethinking of multilingual education, so that students can graduate high school with the ability to not only speak a different language, but to be able to easily read, write and participate in sophisticated dialogues across languages and cultures. This type of bilingualism and biliteracy promotes cognitive flexibility, cross-cultural communication and economic opportunities (Romaine, 1995).

One response to the need to increase students' multilingualism has been the creation of two-way bilingual immersion programs, also referred to as dual language. These types of programs, most common at the elementary level, combine students who speak English with students who are dominant in the other language of instruction. Not only do the classes integrate students with diverse linguistic backgrounds, they can bring together students of different cultural groups as well. Bilingual immersion programs have grown in certain parts of the nation, such as California, New York, and Texas (CAL, 2009). According to the Center for Applied Linguistics there were 359 two-way programs in 28 states across the US in the year 2010.

As a professor who works with teachers in such programs, on more than one occasion I have been asked, "Is there any research that says bilingual immersion programs are for gifted students?" My initial response to such inquiries was one of surprise and I answered the question with another question, "Why do you ask?" In their public schools students were being screened for admission, with those who were stronger academically and/or behaved well being sent to the two-way programs, while all others were placed in different types of models, such as a transitional bilingual program or an English as a second language (ESL) program, thereby creating a tracking system for who is sent to the multilingual versus monolingual streams. The outcome is often one where students from White, middle-upper class and strong formal academic backgrounds are given a further advantage of developing fluency and literacy in two languages, while those who are poor, minoritized and/or immigrants with limited formal schooling are denied the chance to build on their native language and asked to replace it

solely with English, often to the detriment of their overall literacy development.

The connection with bilingualism and giftedness in the context of two-way bilingual immersion programs is in direct contrast to transitional bilingual programs, where students labeled as English Language Learners (ELLs) are taught in their native language until they acquire enough English proficiency to move into mainstream English classes. Transitional bilingual programs have been viewed through a deficit lens, because they aim to fill a gap in the students' knowledge or fix a perceived problem they have: the lack of English. Transitional bilingual programs and two-way bilingual programs not only differ in their overall goals, but also in the way they have been positioned as deficit versus gifted programs for students learning a second (or third) language. This dichotomy presumes that learners of English are delayed whereas those learning a language in addition to English (within two-way bilingual immersion programs) are gifted. This "either/or" mentality does little to build on the linguistic strengths of all students and create a school system, and eventually a society, where all students are at least bilingual, if not multilingual.

Clearly, learning in two languages is more difficult than learning in one. However, with the appropriate academic and social support systems in place (see Freeman, Freeman & Mercuri, 2005; Lindholm-Leary, 2001; Reyes & Kleyn, 2010; Torres-Guzmán, 2002) students from all backgrounds are able to succeed in two-way immersion programs. It should be noted that not all two-way immersion programs discriminate in terms of their student population. There are programs that integrate a collaborative team-teaching (CTT) approach so that students with dis/abilities can take part in this enriching model of language education. These programs show us that students from all backgrounds can and should have the opportunity for a bilingual education.

The not so secret message of programming decisions regarding acceptance or rejection into two-way bilingual immersion programs so early on in students' educational careers is that bilingualism and biliteracy is only possible and available for "gifted" students. However, if we zoom out to consider who speaks two or more languages on a global scale, we find that over half of the world's citizens are bi or multilingual (Tucker, 1999). The question then is whether these individuals are all gifted or whether speaking multiple languages is the norm. The answer may be different from the traditional US perspective, rather than the view of the majority of the world where there exists an emphasis on the fluency of at least two languages through most educational systems and societal values. When we start to see bilingualism as a given or expectation for all, two-way bilingual immersion programs will offer students of all backgrounds and abilities the chance to be enriched and better prepared to participate in the local, national and global sphere. The connection between bilingualism and giftedness is a dangerous and divisive one that can build an exclusive and further segregated populace where the achievement gap, which has been more accurately referred to as a resource gap still persists (Nieto, 2006). Instead of teaching languages to students perceived as gifted who will become bilingual, we need to change our thinking and give the gift of bilingualism to all students, so they are enriched and able to benefit personally, socially and professionally, as our society also reaps the benefits of a multilingual and multicultural citizenry

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March 2010

### World Language Professionalism in Changing Times

*By Dr. Michael E. Everson, The University of Iowa*

While some observers think that K-12 teacher development programs focus only on what teachers need to know to conduct effective classroom language lessons, becoming a world language professional requires an array of skills and talents that are considerably more varied. Indeed, teacher development specialists have worked hard to articulate the knowledge and skill sets necessary to become an effective language educator (ACTFL, 2002), to include content areas that run the gamut between knowledge of their language to professional responsibilities. Yet, to answer the question "What does it take to be accepted as a professional in the language teaching world?" we must understand that "the language teaching world" is far wider and more inclusive of others than previously imagined. By this I mean that the stakeholders in the language teaching world are not only our language teaching colleagues and students, but a host of others whose confidence in our ability to conduct ourselves professionally is paramount for the success of our discipline.

To develop world language professionals, my recent work with prospective teachers and national planning initiatives in teacher development have led me to believe that there are three "must haves" that a world language professional must develop over time—1.) be able to communicate our discipline to others; 2.) be professionally prepared to work effectively in a variety of language learning settings involving diverse learners, and 3.) have an understanding of the use and potential of technology for language learning.

#### Communicating our Discipline

Professionals not only master sets of knowledge and skills to perform their duties, but also must be able to share and communicate their knowledge to others in meaningful and understandable ways. A doctor must be able to explain complex test results to patients, and lawyers must communicate the meaning and import of complex points of law. Members of the world language profession over the past 30 years have made it a priority to define and measure what it means to be proficient in a world language, thereby giving us the means to communicate to others the subtleties of proficiency development. Over the past few decades, the profession has developed standards to inform our curricula

as to what K-12 students should know upon completing our programs, with assessment guidelines to describe how well they have accomplished these objectives. This evidentiary approach helps to establish partnerships in accountability with the students who take our courses, the parents who have entrusted their children's success to our care, and the administrators who can translate the results we communicate to them into the support and resources we so desperately need. We also must be prepared to communicate the importance of our discipline to those who, in times of economic crisis and marginal acceptance, view world language as a target for cuts and downsizing. For world language education to succeed, we must be able to articulate the role of world language education at a more strategic level, as one of the keys to enabling our nation's global competitiveness in the 21st century (Asia Society-CCSSO, 2009).

### **Breadth of Knowledge**

A second element required of a world language professional is the need to acquire a breadth of knowledge so as to teach diverse learners in a variety of settings. Our profession has always felt that its professionals must have an in-depth knowledge and proficiency in the languages they teach, and this has not changed. Yet, as language professionals call for a "start early, stay longer" model of language education for our children, learning settings and the students they attract will be more diverse, calling into question the ability to apply a "one size fits all" philosophy of instruction. Prospective teachers will need very specialized knowledge in child language development, and how first and second language acquisition and literacy develop in a variety of instructional settings involving both children and adults. Moreover, heritage language learners of different ages who come to the classroom with a variety of acquisition and literacy profiles will challenge our teachers' abilities further, requiring teachers to receive broader pre- and in-service education to stay current. The model of "start early, stay longer" will also enable learners at an earlier age to confront subject matter in the target language, adding yet another dimension of preparation for our prospective world language professionals.

### **Technology and Language Learning**

Lastly, there is no doubt but that world language professionals will need to become masters of existing and emerging technologies to exploit language learning opportunities in non-traditional settings. I had the privilege of teaching at the United State Air Force Academy for 10 years during the '80's and '90's when our department was developing a state-of-the-art language laboratory. In the 1980's, we still talked in terms of "computers teaching languages," a thought that terrified some instructors who felt that their jobs would be threatened by the advent of computer-assisted instruction. I remember my colleague, Michael Bush (now a professor at Brigham Young University), and his mantra on this issue: "Computers will never replace language teachers," he would say, "but language teachers who use computers will replace language teachers who don't." The term "computers" has been replaced with the more inclusive term "technology," a term encompassing a constellation of technological language learning/teaching resources imaginable by only a few in the '80's. With resources now available that allow collaborative learning environments, online communication, social networking and media sharing (Johnson, et. al., 2009), the challenge for language educators to "think outside the box" makes me realize now more than ever that Michael was right.

These are only three aspects of professionalism that I believe are paramount—I'm sure there are more. Maybe they should be termed "aspirations" instead of aspects, because language professionals will tell you that a sense of professionalism is not something that is achieved overnight, but is instilled and developed incrementally over the lifecycle of a teacher's career.

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February 2010

## **New Perceptions about "Foreign," World Language, and English as a Global Language**

*By Sarah Catherine K. Moore, Ph.D, Center for Applied Linguistics, and Sarah Newcomer, Ph.D Candidate, Arizona State University*

In this article, we seek to address key questions about World Languages, but we do not intend to provide complete answers to issues related to the concept of World Languages. We'll address what we mean by world languages in the field of languages teaching, how the field has shifted from notions about *foreign* language, to ideas about *world* language, what are today's global languages, and how English as a global language has affected new world languages.

### **What are "world languages" and what happened to foreign languages?**

Language teaching and learning, and communicating across languages and cultures, reflects key forged relationships across nation-states, cultures, communities, and identities. Historically in the United States, target language instruction for native English speakers has been identified as "foreign language." Within a new era shaped by technologies that supercede geographic, national, and other traditional boundaries, the field of language teaching and learning increasingly identifies with ideas about "world languages." By utilizing the phrase "world languages," language teachers, scholars, researchers, and learners diminish the effects of Western colonization by eliminating any particular language as external, other, or "foreign." By adopting a sociocultural, critical approach to language teaching and learning, practitioners, learners, and researchers acknowledge the relationship between world languages and social, economic, cultural, geographic, political, and the other power structures that affect knowledge construction around language. Today's approach to language teaching avoids ascribing foreignness to language, therefore moving away from an "us/them" split, given our interconnected world. The phrase "world languages" regards languages that cross boundaries, are widespread, and vary from family and community-based languages.

Many of today's secondary schools no longer include *foreign* language departments, but instead departments refer to *world languages*. This change reflects a shifting paradigm within a rapidly shrinking, globalized world in which language, culture, and people are no longer conceptualized as one "unit" (as termed by Dell Hymes in 1967) and wherein ideas like "unity through assimilation", (as with the idea of one, American melting pot) are replaced. In this shifted approach to language teaching, the study of world languages (just as heritage language, dual language, and other forms of multilingual education) encompasses not only the study of the grammar, vocabulary, lexicon, semantics, and syntax, but also the role of multilingualism in a time of globalization. When language teaching and learning, as a field, is reframed amidst globalization, questions emerge regarding whether languages genuinely remain "foreign."

### **Languages in the World of Globalization**

In today's globalized world, language has become an integral component in competitive markets. The dominance of larger languages over those spoken by smaller communities is one implication of language in a globalized world. One reason for recent attention to this issue is the role of Languages of Wider Communication (LWC). These are the languages used by the most people in a particular geographic region to communicate, and might be considered *lingua francas*. Ethnologue, which tracks language use, cites the five languages with the largest populations of speakers: Chinese, Spanish, English, Arabic, and Hindi. For example, among speakers of varieties of Chinese, Mandarin is used as a LWC, and in the Arabic-speaking world, Modern Standard Arabic is used across regions with their own vernaculars. World Englishes reflect the rich, dynamic impact of globalization on English as a Language of Wider Communication and global language.

## World Englishes

The phrase “World Englishes” reflects the outdated notion that English may be viewed only as an American language (or British, Canadian, Australian, etc.) and does not accurately represent world wide English speakers. In today’s global world, English is used by approximately one billion people for a variety of purposes. Researcher Braj Kachru proposes an image depicting three concentric circles, which together represent the spread of English in a globalized world. Among these circles, the Inner Circle characterizes native English speakers for whom English is the majority nation-state language (for example, the U.S., U.K., and Australia). The Outer Circle characterizes speakers of English as a second language in contexts where it plays a dominant role in government, social, and other national institutions (for example, India, and Singapore). The third, Expanding Circle characterizes non-native English speakers in countries where English is viewed as a key international language, but where it is not the native or majority language and for which it does not play an institutional role for the nation-state (for example, China and Russia). For those living in the Outer and Expanding Circles, English may play an important role in speakers’ lives and identity construction.

In the same way that American English gradually emerged as a distinct variety from British English, the spread of English into the Outer Circle (composed of former British colonies like India and Singapore, for example) transformed English into *Englishes*, or new varieties of English. Each of these varieties reflects a unique grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, idioms, and discourse. It’s notable that these new varieties of English challenge much of what Inner Circle English speakers may strongly value, including standardization and ideas about what makes “good” or “proper” English. They also challenge questions about the “ownership” of English. Another emergent issue related to world Englishes regards the difference between oral and written languages, and questions as to literate versus oral societies.

The issue of societies whose languages are both written and oral, versus societies whose languages are only oral, has endured considerable debate. Early researchers argued that societies whose languages occurred in written form reflected cognitive superiority over societies with only oral languages. Though debate remains, generally speaking, language experts have come to the agreement that languages occurring in only spoken form do not reflect diminished cognitive or intellectual capacity, and that whether a language has been projected into written form is not evidence through which to ascribe societal value.

Similar questions regarding written, versus spoken forms of language relate to whether pidgins, creoles, and non-standard varieties of language like those that have emerged in today’s globalized world (as with *Englishes*, for example) are legitimate forms of language. Given the impact and role of languages of wider communication, non-standard varieties of language are more common than ever before, and they present new issues in language teaching and learning. For example, should language teachers and programs correct non-standard language varieties, and if so, how? Should programs assess teachers’ standard language proficiency? Should access to employment involve standard language requirements?

## Singlishes, Hinglishes, Chinglishes

Three common examples of World *Englishes* are Singlish, Hinglish, and Chinglish—they demonstrate key language issues surrounding World Languages and World English. Each is a new variety of English and represents a unique blend of English with the languages and cultures of countries in Kachru’s notions of the Outer and Expanding Circles. Singlish occurs in Singapore, Hinglish in India, and Chinglish in Hong Kong. For many in each country, these languages are an important part of daily life and identity. Researchers like Rani Rubdy regard these as neutralizing forces that both reduce the hegemonic nature of English as an imperial language, and also facilitate a sense of community-based identity among common speakers. Although these three examples emerged out of the trends in globalization and the spread of English, each represents unique characteristics of respective regions, meaning each also carries distinct language dynamics. Joel Spring (2007) compares the difference between English’s role in the 19th and the 21st century, noting that today’s global English is “a vehicle for participation in the global economy: because, whereas during colonization it was imposed, today it is chosen and “adapted to local linguistic traditions creating a world of ‘Englishes.’”

## Conclusion

By reframing our perceptions about language, language standardization, and inclusivity in a global world, language teachers and learners invite new opportunities to view and value languages and facilitate a better understanding of ourselves *vis a vis* global language shifts. We suggest that a key goal as language educators regards thinking about world languages as not only “big” or “powerful,” but also acknowledging the power of all languages in the world to enrich our communities through diverse worldviews. Embedded in every language is an immeasurable wealth of knowledge and understanding. Language teachers should not lose sight of the worldviews tied up in language, and consistently remind each other what we can learn from all languages about culture, identity, community, time, space, and connectedness across societies. To be certain, each language is a part of the world, just as the world is a part of each language.

## Ed. Note

The discussion on World Englishes is used as an example here of how a language of wider communication can be influenced and modified by the languages and cultures of the different parts of the world where it is spoken. This example is one that all readers of the newsletter can relate to, understand, and apply to their knowledge of other languages, in particular languages of wider communication. The Language Resource Newsletter is aimed at promoting World Language learning within the US, and offers this article from linguists in the field of language policy to include a global perspective on trends in language teaching and learning.

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December 2009

## Attracting and Holding the Attention of Those Millennial Digital Natives

Anup Prakash Mahajan (National Capital Language Resource Center)

Jill Ann Robbins (National Capital Language Resource Center)

The introduction to this presentation was a short video clip showing our colleague, Candice Michalowicz, texting at top speed. The slides for this presentation are available [here as a movie](#) or [here as a PowerPoint](#)

### **Attracting & Holding the Attention of Those Millennial Digital Natives**

by Anup P. Mahajan & Jill Ann Robbins, Ph.D.

The arrival and rapid dissemination of digital technology in the last decades of the 20th century have radically changed today's students. As Prensky (2001) and others have observed, today's students are no longer the people our educational system was designed to teach.

Today's K through college students – referred to as the 'Millennials', a term coined by Howe and Strauss (2000) – represent the first generation to grow up in this new technological era. Born approximately between the years of 1981 and 2000, they have spent their entire lives surrounded by and using computers, video games, instant messaging, digital music players, cell phones, social networking, and other toys and tools of the digital age. These outlets are integral parts of their lives. Prensky (2004) notes, "...their online life is a whole lot bigger than just the Internet. This online life has become an entire strategy for how to live, survive and thrive in the 21st century, where cyberspace is a part of everyday life." For this reason, Millennials are often referred to as 'Digital Natives'.

As a result of the ubiquitous and constantly evolving Information Age and the sheer volume of their interaction with it, Millennials think and process information fundamentally differently from their predecessors. As foreign language educators, then, we must remember that we cannot afford to continue with 20th century knowledge or training as the guide for what are the best ways for these students to learn world languages. They must be constantly engaged, and their language learning environment should be continuously adaptable to innovative learning strategies, or one runs the risk of losing their attention (and more importantly, motivation).

The impacts of maintaining such an environment in the foreign language classroom are numerous, and fall into the categories of language learning function and ways in which Millennials can access world language resources (Mongan-Rallis, 2009).

There are several language learning functions facilitated for Millennials by employing 21st century tools in lesson plans:

- communication,
- socializing, and
- evaluation.

#### **Communication**

In-class communication no longer needs to be solely face-to-face. Today's students can use technology to communicate across the planet. So why can't communication between teachers and their students change, as well? Teachers and Millennials now have at their disposal: blogs, RSS feeds, email, podcasts, [iTunesU](#), discussion boards/groups, webcasts, [Wikis](#), [Nings](#), polls, [Moodles](#), Skype, student response systems (clickers), Facebook, and last, but definitely not least, Twitter. These are all ways that teachers and students can communicate and share news, information, and resource both in and out of the classroom.

#### **Socializing**

Socializing has been in the forefront of the digital revolution. In this era of [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), texting, and instant messaging, where everyone from Senators to celebrities have caught on, students can also collaborate and practice using these accessible tools. Global exchanges connecting teachers and students with their peers across the world through intercultural emails and classroom exchanges are an effective way for Millennials to learn and hone their oral and reading proficiency in world languages. [GlobalSchoolNet.org](#) is a great service that helps teachers locate other schools and classes with whom to conduct online exchanges. [Mixer](#) is another free educational website that allows students to conduct language exchanges online with partners around the world via Skype.

#### **Evaluation**

In this day and age, where evaluation of professors, teachers, companies, and customer service is instantaneous, students also expect to have input (i.e., self-evaluation) continuously. NCLRC has developed a Portfolio Assessment Guide, available on this website. <http://nclrc.org/portfolio/index.html> LinguaFolio, a document in which those who are learning or have learned a language can record and reflect on their language learning and cultural experience, is now available in online formats for a limited number of students; it is hoped that it will be more widely available next fall from [CASLS](#).

#### **Millennials Access Resources Differently**

How Millennials access resources through searching and collecting has a tremendous impact on their ability to learn world languages. With regards to searching for information, products, people, images, etc. in today's environment, students now have access to authentic materials (in text, audio, and video formats) far beyond those the teacher can physically provide in the classroom. One of the skills Millennials bring into the classroom is a penchant for collecting electronic resources. By collecting information and data through mp3 and video, students have the means to create a 'mobile immersion environment' through use of iPods or mp3s on computer. Research projects thus have an enormous potential for depth unknown to previous generations of students.

Another ability that Millennials have perfected is sharing; social networking is nothing if not a platform for sharing of images, video, ideas, and experiences.

So in this new paradigm of learning, what are we as foreign language educators to do? We suggest starting with these two ideas: 1) allow and encourage students to use technology to teach themselves, and 2) encourage students to share the resources they know how to access with their teachers and peers. If we as educators truly want to reach Millennial Digital Natives – and hold their attention – we will have to change.

When in Rome, do as the Romans do... when in the Millennial classroom, do as the Millennials do!

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November 2009

### The Rise and Fall of Russian Language Instruction: A Local Perspective

*An interview with Dr. Pat Barr-Harrison by Leah Mason, NCLRC Senior Researcher*

This month's feature article takes a closer look at what teachers can do if they fear that their language program is in jeopardy of being cut, through a real-life example from Prince George's County in Maryland. The following interview with Dr. Pat Barr-Harrison, a former World Language Supervisor from Prince George's County, tells the story of the survival and continuation of a Russian language education program.



Background: Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) is presently the 18th largest school district in the United States. More than 130,000 students are enrolled in the system which includes 24 high schools, 32 middle schools, 142 elementary schools, and 10 special or vocational centers. Across these schools, 10 languages are offered; French, German, Italian, Latin, Japanese, Russian, Chinese, Spanish, Arabic, and American Sign Language.

#### 1. Can you share with us the history of the Russian language program in Prince George's County?

The Russian program started in the late 1970s at Highpoint High School in PGCPS. It was the first Less Commonly Taught Language (LCTL) to be introduced in the school system. As a result, it was initially an attractive choice for many students interested in language study. Over the last 30 years the program expanded to several high schools in the county and remained effective in at least three of those schools for more than 10 years. As you would do in any school, it is important to market less commonly taught languages, such as Russian, to students. Unfortunately, the introduction and effective marketing of additional LCTLs in the school system (i.e. Italian, Japanese, Arabic, and Chinese) eventually detracted students from the Russian program. Maintaining the Russian language program in PGCPS continues to be a struggle, but it is still surviving in 2 high schools and one middle school. In addition, there are plans to expand the program to a second middle school in the 2010-2011 academic year.

#### 2. What factors caused changes in the development and growth of Russian language programs?

The Russian language programs encountered a variety of factors that contributed to fluctuations in their growth. One factor, which remains a primary concern to both students and parents, is the continuity of the program. Initially, in the middle school where Russian was offered there was not continuity at the feeder high schools. As a result, students were forced to either drop the language when they went to high school or to apply for a transfer to the high school in the county where Russian was taught. Student transfer requests quickly turned into a political issue that sparked debate among parents, teachers, school administrators, and the school board. Eventually a Russian program was established at a high school that provided continuity for the middle school students.

A second factor was the student enrollment in advanced language courses. Small schools could not afford to have multiple advanced level subject areas with only a handful of students in each course. When faced with budget cuts and the decision between continuing to support a calculus class with 7 students or a Russian class with 5 students, those difficult decisions did not usually favor language instruction.

#### 3. How did the introduction of additional languages in primary and secondary schools affect established language programs in PG County?

In PGCPS the introduction of additional LCTLs did affect enrollments in the Russian programs. When the Russian program began, it coincided with a critical time during Cold War discussions between the United States and the Soviet Union. It was 'trendy' and 'attractive' to academically advanced students. Since then, other languages were introduced to the system resulting in a variety of changes in student language enrollment.

Though Italian isn't usually referred to as a LCTL, it really is. Italian became very successful in PGCPS for several reasons. The Italian communities in the area were supportive of the program and there was a member of the school board who was Italian providing additional support. Prior to the introduction of Italian language instruction, the schools offered an Italian Culture Club after school. This club engaged students in learning about Italy and Italian culture, which ultimately sparked their interest in learning the Italian language. The first Italian class offered had an enrollment of 28 students! PGCPS now has 7 high schools offering Italian.

Japanese language instruction was really pushed during the 1980s. There was a lot of support and money from the Japanese government, foundations, organizations, and the embassy to promote Japanese in the schools. In addition, Japan's role as a technological leader reinforced the perception that Japanese was an important language to teach. PGCPS now has 7 high schools offering Japanese.

The focus on Japanese shifted towards Arabic as the United States engaged in wars in the Middle East. At the same time, the Chinese were beginning to export more goods around the world and people realized it was the silent powerhouse coming on the scene. When we began to lose business overseas and Chinese materials were in abundance, we realized that in order to compete in a global marketplace we needed to be able to understand the Chinese culture and speak the language. After 9/11 the Chinese government started putting funds into language instruction in the same way that Japan did in the 1980s. PGCPS now has 3 high schools offering Chinese and one high school offering Arabic.

As a result, in a school system that does not capitalize on language layering, programs like Russian fall along the wayside. Language layering refers to an approach where schools offer students a first world language in the elementary school and then

students have the option to continue studying that language while adding a second or third language at additional entry points in middle and/or high school.

#### 4. What was your role in maintaining the position of Russian language education in PG County?

As a supervisor, I was the support system behind teachers and parents. I was the fighter on the inside of the system. When we believed that a program was in jeopardy, we often worked together to find additional ways to support and promote the program. My office and teachers worked on marketing strategies such as:

- recruiting students
- distributing brochures from language specific organizations that emphasized why it was important to learn that particular language
- creating posters advertising the importance of language learning and holding poster contests
- participating in events, such as International night
- taking high school students to middle schools to showcase culture which includes singing, dancing, and tasting food from around the world

#### 5. What efforts to continue the programs were the most successful?

**Parental involvement was key to ensuring continuation of the programs in PGCPSS.** The parents of students enrolled in Russian were organized and legitimized the program. They were consistent in their message to support Russian instruction and persistent that, as taxpayers, students who entered a program offered by the school had the reasonable expectation of continuity in the program through an advanced level of instruction. Parents took it upon themselves to write letters to the school board, attend school board meetings and speak before the board regularly, indicating that they were not going away. In fact, at one point, the parents were planning to go to the newspapers. It was at this point that the school board told the superintendent that they had made a commitment to those parents when they opened up a level 1 course and it was clear that they could not just drop the program. This was a particularly important point because in the state of Maryland students are required to complete two levels of the same foreign language. So, for example, if students are invested in levels 1 and 2 of a language but cannot continue because the program ends, then the school is ultimately denying the students the opportunity to achieve advanced level proficiency in any language, as students are forced to start a second language without adequate time to go beyond level 2 in the second language either.

**Student petitions were also effective in swaying the school board.** The students wrote petitions about providing continuity in the Russian program and about the necessity to transfer schools in order to gain advanced level instruction. School board members did not want high level students transferring out of their area to attend another high school. As a result, a program was established at Parkdale HS to provide students with a continuous program that did not require students to transfer out of the area. This success was short lived as Japanese, Arabic, and Chinese were eventually introduced at Parkdale. The school board then decided to require a minimum enrollment of 15 students per class in order to continue instruction at that particular level of each language.

#### 6. What recommendations would you give to students, teachers, parents, and/or administrators who want to support the continuation of language programs in their district?

**The first priority is to get parents involved in an organized way.** Parents can write to the school board and attend meetings. They need to be consistent with their message to the board and be persistent that they do something.

**Second, I think the teacher should be proactive with the students to market the program.** Whether it is taking high school students to the middle school or middle school students to the elementary school, wherever the program happens to be, students can best demonstrate and share their language learning experiences. Strategies such as passing out brochures and holding a poster contest can help teachers to explain all of the reasons someone should study the language, the importance of it in the US, and how important it could be as an asset in their career.

**New teachers should always showcase the cultural aspects of language learning in the school.** When teachers post signs, posters, etc. in a foreign language around the school it not only draws attention to the language but also promotes the importance of the language. Participation in International Night highlights language learning in a public forum for parents, administrators, school board members and most importantly other students to see.

**All teachers, especially if they are neophytes, should join their language specific associations.** In addition to the American Council for Teachers of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), our national organization, each language has its own association. These associations are great resources because it is there that teachers get access to current pedagogy and teaching strategies, discover materials to help promote programs, and find opportunities for professional development. By using these resources, as you grow as a teacher you get new ideas that help to maintain your program. When teachers stay current and establish good teaching and assessment practices, programs are more likely to succeed and receive community support.

Comments or Questions? Click [here](#).

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October 2009

#### **Expansion Grants vs. Recession Cuts: A Balancing Act in Language Education**

*By Leah Mason, NCLRC Senior Researcher*

The relationship between government and language education is one which we don't often reflect upon, yet one which significantly affects educators and classroom goals. The government utilizes multilingual individuals in a variety of roles across all agencies and supports language education efforts through programs and initiatives covering K-16 education and beyond. A recent Government Accountability Office (GAO) report entitled [Comprehensive Plan Needed to Address Persistent Foreign Language Shortfalls](#) was issued in September 2009 outlining the deficiencies of Foreign Service officers in language-designated positions. While the State Department has increased and improved training and recruitment efforts for Foreign Service officers over the past three years, nearly one third of all officers did not meet the linguistic requirements for their positions.



This timely report gives cause for language educators to step back and reflect upon changes in language education within the K-16 system, a primary pipeline to government positions requiring linguistic proficiency. As language educators seek to expand established programs and create new programs with [Foreign Language Assistance Programs \(FLAP\) Grants](#), improve professional development with

**STARTALK Grants**, and provide students with opportunities to study abroad through **National Security Language Initiative (NSLI) for Youth**, city and state administrators across the country are faced with the economic reality of budget shortfalls. News articles in September and October highlighted decisions made by administrators to cut world language programs from K-16 education in schools and universities throughout the United States. Some institutions, not willing to cut programs just yet, chose to replace teachers with Rosetta Stone language learning software as a way to save money. These announcements caught the attention of language teachers, language education research and advocacy groups, and language lovers.

**You're Not Alone**

Organizations such as the American Council for Teachers of Foreign Language (ACTFL), the Joint National Committee for Languages – National Council for Languages and International Studies (JNCL-NCLIS), the National Foreign Language Center (NFLC), and many more have continuously taken an active role in promoting language education and supporting language teachers in the United States. In fact, there are currently 15 federally funded **Language Resource Centers (LRCs)** that conduct research, develop materials, and train language educators at all levels. The strong support and proactive nature of language educators enabled the development of national standards for language learning in the 1990s by ACTFL. The recent push to expand critical language instruction in grades K-16, largely driven by the government's **NSLI**, prompted further development of language specific curriculums, professional development, and certification procedures for language teachers. Numerous organizations have advocated the benefits of language learning and multilingualism through brochures, public service announcements, and informational presentations.

Support and advocacy for language learning is, however, sometimes more of a 'behind the scenes' effort. U.S. House of Representatives Rep. Rush Holt (D-NJ) is preparing a bill, the Foreign Language Education Partnership Act, to be re-introduced this month establishing this partnership as an amendment to the ESEA/FLAP program. According to Holt, "This legislation would provide incentives for creating model programs of articulated, sequenced foreign language instruction from K-12, with the goal of graduating high school students with an advanced level of proficiency."

**The Importance of Language Learning**

However, only recently have organizations stressed why language learning is important for our nation. Military efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan have been hampered by the lack of linguistic knowledge among troops and military officials. The Department of State, Department of Defense, and the Office of National Intelligence have reiterated the importance of building capacity in languages for diplomacy, intelligence, and emergency rescue efforts. The US government is currently in the process of piloting a **National Language Service Corps (NLSC)** which taps into the already established linguistic knowledge of US citizens in order to support government in these endeavors. Increased language learning will help to build capacity within the NLSC. Beyond the scope of the government, language learning is also an important 21st century skill necessary for US students to become global citizens who participate in a global community. **The Partnership for 21st Century Skills** places world languages as a core subject in their framework which is essential for all students. Advances in transportation, technology, and international business practices have placed a higher value on multilingualism, giving multilingual individuals an advantage in global communities. For the United States to remain competitive with other countries, our citizens must develop the linguistic skills to compete.

So, while in difficult financial times it may feel like world language education is falling through the cracks, this article is a reminder of the positive efforts and numerous programs moving language education into the 21st century! The number of federal programs supporting foreign language education for non-government language students has increased and expanded over the past few years, in particular with the addition of the NSLI. As language educators, it is our responsibility to promote language learning within our communities and utilize the resources available to us to educate and inform others of the importance of learning language for our country.

Recommended Articles	Resources	Additional Resources (not mentioned in the article)
<p>Aujla, Simmi. (2009, October 5). <a href="#"><u>At Texas Flagship, Budget Cut May Translate Into Shrinking Language Requirements. The Chronicle of Higher Education.</u></a></p> <p>Berdan, Stacie N. (2009, September 15). <a href="#"><u>No More Cuts! Keep Foreign Languages in Schools. The Huffington Post.</u></a></p> <p>Department of State. (2009, September). <a href="#"><u>Comprehensive Plan Needed to Address Persistent Foreign Language Shortfalls.</u></a> Washington, DC: Government Accountability Office</p>	<p><b>Foreign Language Assistance Programs Grants (FLAP)</b> <a href="http://www.ed.gov/programs/flap/index.html"><u>http://www.ed.gov/programs/flap/index.html</u></a></p> <p>This program provides grants to establish, improve, or expand innovative foreign language programs for elementary and secondary school students. In awarding grants under this program, the secretary of education supports projects that: (a) show the promise of being continued beyond their project period and (b) demonstrate approaches that can be disseminated and duplicated by other LEAs.</p> <p><b>STARTALK Grants</b> <a href="http://startalk.umd.edu/proposals"><u>http://startalk.umd.edu/proposals</u></a></p> <p>STARTALK is part of a federal initiative to enhance the national capacity for critical need languages (Arabic, Chinese, Dari, Hindi, Persian, Russian, Swahili, Turkish, and Urdu). The goal of these programs is to increase the number and expertise of students and teachers in these critical languages. <b>The online application process for 2010 begins on October 8, 2009, and completed proposals will be due on November 5, 2009.</b></p> <p><b>NSLI for Youth</b> <a href="http://www.nsliforyouth.org/nslicms-0.2/"><u>http://www.nsliforyouth.org/nslicms-0.2/</u></a></p> <p>The US Department of State through the National Security Language Initiative for Youth (NSLI-Y) provides merit-based scholarships for eligible high school students to learn less commonly taught languages in summer, semester, and academic year international immersion programs. NSLI-Y encourages beginning, intermediate, and advanced language learners with a passion for learning</p>	<p>National Resource Centers <a href="http://www.ed.gov/programs/iegpsnrc"><u>http://www.ed.gov/programs/iegpsnrc</u></a></p> <p>International Business (Title VI) <a href="http://ciberweb.msu.edu/"><u>http://ciberweb.msu.edu/</u></a></p> <p>Undergraduate International and FL Studies Program (Title VI) <a href="http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/iegps/title-six"><u>http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/iegps/title-six</u></a></p> <p>American Overseas Research Centers (Title VI) <a href="http://www.ed.gov/programs/iegpsaorc"><u>http://www.ed.gov/programs/iegpsaorc</u></a></p> <p>International Research and Studies Program (Title VI) <a href="http://www.ed.gov/programs/iegpsirs"><u>http://www.ed.gov/programs/iegpsirs</u></a></p> <p>Foreign Language and Area Studies Grants (Title VI) <a href="http://www.ed.gov/programs/iegpsflasf"><u>http://www.ed.gov/programs/iegpsflasf</u></a></p> <p>Institute for International Public Policy (Title VI) <a href="http://www.ed.gov/programs/iegpsiupp"><u>http://www.ed.gov/programs/iegpsiupp</u></a></p> <p>Fulbright-Hayes Training Grants <a href="http://www.ed.gov/programs/iegpsddrap"><u>http://www.ed.gov/programs/iegpsddrap</u></a> <a href="http://www.ed.gov/programs/iegpsfra"><u>http://www.ed.gov/programs/iegpsfra</u></a> <a href="http://www.ed.gov/programs/iegpsgpa"><u>http://www.ed.gov/programs/iegpsgpa</u></a></p> <p>Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education <a href="http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/fipse"><u>http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/fipse</u></a></p> <p>National Security Education Program <a href="http://www.nsep.gov/"><u>http://www.nsep.gov/</u></a></p> <p>National Endowment for the Humanities <a href="http://www.neh.gov/"><u>http://www.neh.gov/</u></a></p>

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13). [Foreign  
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as Schools Look  
for Cuts](#). NY  
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languages, communicating across cultures, and living abroad to apply.

**National Language Service Corps (NLSC)**  
<http://www.nlscorps.org/>

The NLSC offers individuals with language expertise the opportunity to help their neighbors and fellow citizens by participating in national and state efforts, particularly in times of emergency or crisis when their expertise can truly make a difference. This opportunity serves a greater good, a human good ... and the NLSC is working to honor and amplify that good.

The mission of the NLSC is to recruit a readily-available pool of individuals who have expertise in languages that are important to the security and welfare of the nation. The NLSC provides certification to qualified individuals as part of its enrollment process.

**National Security Language Initiative (NSLI)**  
<http://exchanges.state.gov/nsli.html>

The National Security Language Initiative (NSLI), is an inter-agency effort coordinated by the White House to dramatically increase the number of Americans learning, speaking, and teaching critical need foreign languages. Foreign language skills are essential to engaging foreign governments and peoples, especially in critical world regions, to promote understanding, convey respect for other cultures, and encourage reform. These skills are also fundamental to the economic competitiveness and security interests of the nation.

**Language Resource Centers (LRCs)**  
<http://nflrc.msu.edu/>

The common goal of the Language Resource Centers (LRCs) is to promote the learning and teaching of foreign languages in the United States. The US Department of Education established the first LRCs at US universities in 1990 in response to the growing national need for expertise and competence in foreign languages. Led by nationally and internationally recognized language professionals, LRCs create language-learning materials, offer professional development workshops, and conduct research on foreign language learning.

**Partnership for 21st Century Schools**  
<http://www.21stcenturyskills.org/>

The Partnership for 21st Century Skills has emerged as the leading advocacy organization focused on infusing 21st century skills into education. Bringing together the business community, education leaders, and policymakers, we have defined a powerful vision for 21st century education to ensure every child's success as citizens and workers in the 21st century. The Partnership encourages schools, districts and states to advocate for the infusion of 21st century skills into education and provides tools and resources to help facilitate and drive change.

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**Patriotic Opportunities for Critical Language Speakers**  
**Language for the Good of All**  
**February 2009**  
[Download Printable File](#)



The government continues to introduce initiatives that highlight the importance of foreign language programs among teachers, students and the U.S. population as a whole. In 2006, the National Security Education Program (NSEP) created the congressionally mandated pilot program-- the National Language Service Corps (NLSC) in an effort to gauge the interest of multi-lingual Americans willing to serve language communities and the government in times of national need.

The National Language Service Corps is a group of individuals united by the fundamental belief that *language has a tremendous impact on who we are; who we can be; and what we can do together*. In addition to making a significant and worthwhile contribution to the nation

and its language communities, Members will become part of a unique language network of service-minded individuals. All Members must be U.S. Citizens who are at least 18 years or older, possessing language expertise and a genuine desire to help their fellow language communities.

This much-anticipated organization has captured the interest of teachers, government officials and individuals, who not only realize their language skills are valuable, but believe in the importance in having these skills available to help others in the event of a US national crisis. During the pilot program, Charter Members, the name that distinguishes the first 1,000 enrolled Members, will register in a national database. The NLSC is not intrusive on the member's current employment, nor is there a fee to join, and the members will be compensated for the service they provide during an assignment. For example, when Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast and affected the lives of over 35,000 Vietnamese residents, there was no federal agency that could mobilize volunteers with specific language skills to assist that community. The NLSC will fill that gap by maintaining a ready pool of volunteers who in addition to speaking, reading and understanding English can communicate in other languages. Accordingly, the NLSC was created to screen willing applicants, verify their language skills, gauge interest and practice scenario exercises in preparation of requests from federal agencies that have a requirement for language speakers but do not have a means to access them. During the pilot, fewer Members will be on assignment, but the organization has staff available to interact with these Members and receive feedback about their experience.

One might think that the NLSC is just a program for language professionals, or for those seeking eventual employment in the US Government. Au contraire! The NLSC needs all language advocates. Of course, language professionals are welcomed. Federal agencies may request an NLSC Member for an assignment, but members may opt out of the assignment based on their preferences whether agency, location or not being available.

Currently, the program has a goal of enrolling 1,000 Charter Members who speak English and one of the ten pilot languages: Mandarin Chinese, Thai, Russian, Vietnamese, Hausa, Swahili, Somali, Indonesian, Hindi and Marshallese. For those individuals interested in participating but whose language is not on the list, you can still complete an application to be held and converted for membership as the list of languages and the number of Members are expected to expand in the future.

Links to specific languages of interest are listed below :

[English Only](#)

[Hindi/English](#)

[Marshallese/English](#)

[Vietnamese/English](#)

[Chinese Mandarin/English](#)

[Indonesian/English](#)

[Russian/English](#)

Additional information about the National Language Service Corps is available at [www.nlscorps.org](http://www.nlscorps.org) or you can call 1-888-SAY-NLSC.

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## When Students Run the Classroom: Global Language Network

By Tom Braslavsky

December 2008

To become a language teacher at Andrew Brown's **Global Language Network**, there are three requirements: to be a native speaker, to be willing to volunteer and to commit to a weekly schedule.

"We prefer people without teaching background because we like to give them the skills and open them up to the joy of teaching, so to speak," said Brown, who founded the GLN as a student at The George Washington University in 2005.

The GLN is now a 501(c) 3 not-for-profit organization with chapters at GW and three other universities. It has the mission, according to its website, of making "language and culture education free and fun for everyone, everywhere." The chapters run two different types of language classes:

**Language Immersion** classes, which are more comprehensive and meet for two to three hours each week; and **Survival Skills** classes, which teach practical skills and meet for one hour per week, but do not require a commitment. They are all free.



GLN Founder and Executive Director Andrew Brown

Since its inception, Brown said, the GLN has trained just under 300 volunteer teachers. This year, the organization teamed up with the World Bank and a couple of volunteer video producers to put together a training video which is now available in DVD format.



A Spanish immersion class with instructor Fabiana

Brown explained the three main points that distinguish the GLN's approach to language instruction:

"First, we focus on building confidence in a language regardless of supposed level of fluency.

"Secondly, our direct teaching approach immerses students in language and a culture and gives them confidence in that culture without the need to go to a foreign country.

"Third, we really use the idea of community in the classroom.

Trying to create dialogue and conversation and make students comfortable – and most importantly, making it fun."

Brown emphasized the last point, explaining that without being fun for both students and teachers, a language class cannot succeed.

"You can do whatever you want to teach effectively, but if students aren't having fun, they're not going to enjoy the language or enjoy learning it," Brown said. "If the teacher is not having fun, they lose their motivation to teach, and if [that happens], then...the students aren't having fun or learning."

If measured by sheer popularity, that philosophy seems to be working. When he founded the GLN in 2005 (originally called just Global Languages), the group consisted of only Brown teaching six languages. Within three weeks, the number of languages grew to 20, with 10 teachers. Since then, the GLN has offered classes in up to 55 different languages, with about 400 students this semester

alone. (see chart of enrollments below)

One need only look at the testimonials on the GLN website to see the impact it has had on past students and instructors. Reviews by students were full of praise for the program and teachers:

- "I have already recommended the Global Language Network to others. Its possibilities for language learning are limitless," a Beginning Arabic student wrote.
- "My Spanish instructor was always enthusiastic and adapted the class to meet the students' interests," an Advanced Spanish student wrote.
- "My instructor with the Global Language Network is one of the best language instructors I've ever had. She was enthusiastic and taught us a great deal about the culture as well," a Beginning Albanian student wrote.

Brown's pride showed when he spoke about the GLN's effect. "I've heard some amazing stories," he said. He brought up the example of Lynn, a student who signed up for a Spanish class, but could not get in because there was not enough room (the immersion classes are capped at 20 students). She was frustrated, but then Brown recommended that instead she take a class in beginning Bosnian. After a semester, she was hooked.

"She took one semester with us, and then another because she loved it so much. They were going out to Bosnian restaurants and met with the Bosnian ambassador, and it really added value to her experience. And she ended up recently accepting a position as director of international programs at Sarajevo University. So it ended up completely changing her life," Brown said.

How does the GLN keep granting such experiences at no cost? When asked about how he has been able to keep language classes free, Brown spoke more seriously: "It's definitely been a struggle, because there are definitely a lot of barriers along the way."

Brown said that he initially had trouble raising enough money. Working three jobs as a college student, he hoped to use his money to take a post-graduation trip around the world. The GLN, however, proved too important.

"I realized I loved this so much, that I just put it all in," Brown said. "I threw in my life savings." Brown led the GLN in raising \$30,000 the first year. The network's ideology kept him involved.

"I came from an idealist view," Brown said. "I love the idea of making language and culture education free and fun and acceptable to people. My thought was that if everybody had access to it, they would take advantage of it."

He chuckled at the idea of charging for classes: "If people are willing to sign up to teach for free, then why charge for it?"

Brown mentioned the importance for young Americans of learning other languages and expressed dismay at the lack of focus given to foreign language education in the United States.

"Language is so essential now for anything that people want to do, especially with the younger generation that has such a global mindset, that wants to go out and be active," he said. "And I don't think there's enough support for that financially and politically."

The GLN is playing its part. Brown has received over 60 applications from students around the country who want to set up chapters at their universities to spread free language classes.

"We don't have the resources to do it all at once, so we're working on one [new chapter] at a time," Brown said.

Having taught 10 languages in different settings all around the world, Brown explained his own perspective on language instruction.

"The bottom line is that you have to make it fun and engaging...It's important to get students to connect with you, and the language, and the culture."

See the [Global Language Network's website here](#). Below is a chart showing enrollments in GLN classes for the past four years.

**Global Language Network at GW Fall 2005—Fall 2008 Student, Class, and Teacher Data**

Semester	Registered Students	Immersion Classes	Survival Skills Classes	Total Classes	GW Teachers	Non-GW Teachers	Total Teachers
Fall 05	n/a	n/a	23	23	22	0	22
Spring 06	n/a	n/a	45	45	40	2	42
Summer 06	75	16	0	16	9	7	16
Fall 06	91	11	23	34	24	8	32
Spring 07	172	18	27	45	29	14	43
Summer 07	181	21	5	26	8	16	24
Fall 07	323	30	7	37	18	19	37
Spring 08	408	36	6	42	20	22	42
Fall 08	345	30	3	33	16	16	32
<b>Total</b>	<b>1595</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>290</b>

**\*Note:** Some instructors teach more than one class. Also, non-GW teachers include GW alumni and GW professors.

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## The Importance of Early Language Study: Changing Students' Minds – and Brains?

By Karelia Pallan

Learning a foreign language may be one of the most important disciplines a student learns in school—perhaps outweighing even the highly lauded math and sciences. Recent language research suggests numerous additional benefits to second language learning, especially if begun from an early age. Students gain not only knowledge and vocabulary, but also a different way of thinking that enriches their learning later in life.

Although some educators have speculated that learning a second language might confuse young children and even detract from their knowledge of their native language, quite the opposite is true. Research has shown that children who learn a second language are able to enhance not only native language skills, but also other cognitive and creative areas. For example, the more advanced critical thinking skills developed allowed foreign language learners to surpass their peers in both the verbal and math sections of the 2003 SAT. Similarly, a study

conducted by Dr. Carolyn Taylor of a Louisiana standardized test among fourth graders found that those students who studied a foreign language significantly outperformed their peers on every test, including English, mathematics, science, and social studies. A 1993 study of immersion programs in Fairfax County found that students also maintained a high level of academic excellence throughout their school careers.

The benefits range far beyond just standardized tests, however. In "The Benefits of Being Bilingual," author Kathleen M. Marcos writes that 1991 research by Kathryn W. Bamford and Donald T. Mizokawa suggests that "students who receive second language instruction are more creative and better at solving complex problems." The linguist Ellen Bialystok found that bilingual children understand better the symbolic representation of words. And in *The Cognitive Advantages to Balanced Bilingualism*, author Lisa Chipongian writes that "bilingual children have also demonstrated superior story-telling skills, perhaps because they are, as Baker suggests, 'less bound by words, more elastic in thinking due to owning two languages.'" Children who study a second language early more easily develop native-like pronunciation and achieve high levels of fluency by high school and college. In the article "Being Bilingual Boosts Brain Power," author Miranda Hitti writes that due to all the research for positive gains, "It is clear that the knowledge of two languages has the potential to be much greater than the sum of its parts."

Educators and parents alike are seeing these added benefits to language learning, and have recently been petitioning for even more foreign language programs. Paula Patrick, a foreign language coordinator at the Fairfax County Public Schools in Virginia said she has seen parental input and request for foreign language multiply in just the last five years. "Parents know what is needed to succeed in the 21st century and they want their children to start early so they have that edge," Patrick said. She added that studying a foreign language brings about greater cultural awareness and sensitivity, which helps in job opportunities. "My big push is to get students from thinking 'I'm taking it because I have to take it,' to 'I need to take it because it will help me in my career path.'"

Patrick explained that the program her school system is implementing—the Foreign Language in the Elementary School, or FLES, program—allows students to learn a language in a more natural way by learning content in the target language instead of learning about the target language. For example, Patrick said, if the students are currently learning about butterflies in their science lesson, the foreign language teacher will pick up on that theme and teach about the life cycle of butterflies or the color of butterflies in the foreign language so that the two lessons are integrated. "That way," Patrick said, "foreign language is not an interruption but an enhancement to what students are learning in the classroom."

In the book *Languages and Children: Making the Match*, authors Helena Curtain and Carol Ann Dahlberg are also proponents of this method. They write that in this method, the children are "in a setting in which they are surrounded by language that is made meaningful because of the context and because of the way teachers speak to them." Patrick said that learning a language is like playing an instrument: daily practice from an early age allows children to be very adept by the time they finish high school.

But educators and teachers need to not only look at the availability of a foreign language program, but also the quality, Patrick cautions. "We can check off a box that says, 'Yes, we offer foreign language,'" she said, "but we really need to look at how well students perform in that program." She added that in times of budget concerns, teachers and educators need to make the case to officials and principals to keep foreign language instruction. Principals need to be shown that the model for foreign language instruction has changed from when they attended school, and that now students are learning real-life practical applications and getting the opportunity to practice and use the language. "The focus is more communicative, so they apply what they learn, and perform what they learn, which is giving them the tools to use it in a real job," Patrick said. "The benefits of taking a language class have changed dramatically."

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## Volunteers Abroad

By *Karelia Pallan*

Most students want to travel or study abroad at some point during their study of a foreign language not only to practice speaking but also to learn firsthand all the different aspects of a culture. But have you ever thought your students could manage to do all this—and still help out the local community? Volunteering abroad exposes students to the same daily interactions and also allows them to give back to the community they are visiting. Organizations offer anything from weeklong projects, like Alternative Spring Break trips, to extended stays that last three or more months.

### How to find opportunities

First, students can look for volunteer opportunities on Idealist.org based on area of focus, desired destination country, and start and end dates. Go to <http://www.idealists.org/if/as/vol> to search from over 13,000 opportunities all over the world. Also, the World Youth, Student, and Educational Travel Confederation has a list of over 550 member organizations that provide volunteer and work cultural exchange experiences. Download this list: [http://www.aboutwsetc.org/Docs/ConfMem\\_List\\_April\\_2008.pdf](http://www.aboutwsetc.org/Docs/ConfMem_List_April_2008.pdf) organized by countries. The International Volunteer Programs Association ([www.volunteerinternational.org](http://www.volunteerinternational.org)) offers its own membership to a select number of organizations, and its website has tips to fundraise for your trip and answers to frequently asked questions about volunteering abroad.

### Be selective about programs

Be mindful of some dot com organizations, which may be operating more to gain business than to provide an enriching program. The Council on Standards for International Education Travel judges organizations based on 9 standards, including educational goals and student insurance. Visit its website at <http://www.csiet.org> to find a program based on your own interests.

For those interested in more information and news regarding volunteering abroad, visit the Building Bridges Coalition (<http://www.idealists.org/if/bridges/en/Home/default>), an initiative of the Brookings Institution that is committed to doubling the number of international volunteers by 2010.

One of the member organizations of the Building Bridges Coalition is **Cross-Cultural Solutions** ([www.crossculturalsolutions.org](http://www.crossculturalsolutions.org)). The organization works with individuals or groups and has hosted Alternative Spring Break trips in the past. University credit can also be arranged for a few select colleges in the U.S.

**United Planet** ([www.unitedplanet.org](http://www.unitedplanet.org)) offers a combination of volunteering, language learning, and excursions in the host country

through their Volunteer Abroad Quests that can last from a week to a year. **The International Cultural Youth Exchange** ([www.icve.org](http://www.icve.org)) offers a great variety of service opportunities in 34 different countries touching on several different areas of interest and either short or long term stays. **The Center for Cultural Interchange** ([www.cci-exchange.com](http://www.cci-exchange.com)) offers "eco-voluntourism" opportunities with their Greenheart Program. Students learn about environmental issues and their impact on a community and then work on projects that help conserve local ecologies.

**Global Volunteers** ([www.globalvolunteers.org](http://www.globalvolunteers.org)) offers short-term one or two week programs, many of which are teaching English to local schoolchildren in about 20 different countries.

#### Find out total costs

Most exchanges have program fees that include the cost of lodging, food, and insurance, but not transportation to the country or personal expenses. The shorter term stays are about \$2,000 to \$3,000, but this does not include airfare. Be sure to check the individual programs to see exactly what the fees do and do not cover. And remember, you can always fundraise part of the money and apply for scholarships to cover some of the costs.

#### Not just for students – Teachers can go, too!

Finally, study abroad adventures are no longer just for students. Foreign language educators can now earn graduate and professional development credit and travel the world with the Global Exploration for Educators Organization, a non-profit created in order to provide teachers an opportunity to learn more about the language they teach and share their newfound perspectives with their students.

GEEO is hosting trips to Peru and India this summer, and offers grants and scholarships to interested teachers. For more information, visit the site at [www.geeo.org](http://www.geeo.org).

#### Use experiences in the classroom

After your students have traveled abroad, be sure to ask them to make presentations to other classes or students about what they have learned; they will undoubtedly have much to share about the target language culture and have fresh insights about language learning. This can be inspirational to younger students and may motivate them to greater achievement or to find their own opportunities for volunteering.

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### One O'Clock, Two O'Clock, Three O'Clock, Matemáticas!

By Jill Robbins

This month's theme is connecting math content to language learning. As usual, our best resource is you – so we asked our readers how you integrate math content into your language classes. Here are some of your ideas:

#### Survey Says...

A teacher of beginning Spanish write that students "compose surveys based upon the content (how many students like baseball, basketball, swimming, etc.). When we are learning the numbers I give them math problems in Spanish and they have to write them down and give the correct answer to get the points."



#### Bears Galore in Germany

Lucia in Germany writes that "I teach kindergarten Spanish FLES. We name the numbers in the target language of course (we can count to 40 by now). We also name the shapes. Beyond that, we use manipulatives such as small plastic bears to see the quantities that the numbers represent (cinco bears = 5), we perform math operations such as addition and subtraction (tres osos rojos + siete osos verdes = ? osos), we sort a certain number of bears by color, we use the bears to make patterns (dos rojos, un azul y tres amarillos - repeat the pattern cinco veces) and we count by 10 using groups of 10 bears of different colors. We use the shapes to describe our world (we compared two pigs and a student told me that one was more "ovalo" and the other more "circulo") I use the shapes to explain how to draw something; I taped a different shape on each table and when I send students to a certain table, I determine the table by naming the shape and the color (John, sientate in la mesa con el triangulo cafe por favor)."

#### French Schedules

Telling time is a common way to teach the numbers in language classes. One teacher wrote, "Just last week we were learning to tell time and developed a survey of questions such as:

- A quelle heure arrives-tu a l'école?
- A quelle heure manges-tu le petit déjeuner?
- A quelle heure te couches-tu? and so on.

Students in class than polled each other and using an excel program created a variety of interesting graphs to share their information."

#### Watch out for low-flying tomatoes!

Have you heard of the Tomato Festival in Spain? Here's a great math tie-in with that: "According to the Realidades level one Spanish text, the Fiesta de la Tomatina in Bunnol, Spain is a 2-hour long tomato-throwing food fight using more than 130 tons of tomatoes. I asked my students to calculate how many classrooms like ours (22'W x 33'L x 9'H) filled with tomatoes would approximate 130 tons of tomatoes. We assumed a standard tomato to be 3" dia., 1/4 pound. We then determined that 1 cubic foot = 64 tomatoes / 4 tom. per pound = 16 pounds. Next, we multiplied 22x33x9 room dimensions =6,534 cubic feet x 16 pounds per cubic foot = 104,544 pounds of tomatoes to fill one classroom. 130 tons, or, 260,000 pounds / 104,544 pounds = 2.487 classrooms. I showed how the approx. answer could be found by changing 260,000 / 104,544 ( a hard div. problem) to 260 / 104, or better, 26 / 10 = approx. 2 1/2 classrooms full of tomatoes. We related this to going to the cafeteria and having 2 1/2 classrooms full of tomatoes delivered for a great food fight. My 7th grade class stayed involved in solving the puzzle and enjoyed doing this."

#### Mayans and Euros?

Bethe, a Spanish teacher in Annapolis, teaches Mayan mathematics to her 7th grade students. She says, "The 8th graders have been tracking the euro rate throughout the year and work on a variety of conversion problems as warm ups. It has really helped the students with the larger numbers and offered a foundation for basic economic conversations. Students receive "play" euro bills for their tests, quizzes, and projects. At the end of the year, we plan on having an auction to get students to bid on simple Spanish trinkets - using their larger numbers. It has been a fun and motivating way to get students to use the larger numbers."

Finally, a teacher claimed, "I do it all the time! Students laugh about that: I use +, -, = and other signs to explain simple grammatical rules."

Get in on the conversation by answering this month's question here: [http://nclrc.org/month\\_question.html](http://nclrc.org/month_question.html)

#### Polling Place

In our poll, we asked for the elements of mathematics content that teachers integrate with language lessons, and found that the largest number of teachers instruct how to say the numbers in the target language. The next most popular responses were telling time, working story problems, and counting syllables in poetry. Some teachers talk about geometric shapes, using money, and the use of periods and commas for decimals. See the poll results here: [http://nclrc.org/month\\_poll.html](http://nclrc.org/month_poll.html)

See our "For Your Classroom" column for more examples and resources that will help you to design your own lessons to integrate math and language learning.

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## Preparing powerful presentations

*by Sheila Cockey and Dorcas Francisco*

The presentational mode is one of the three components of the Communication Standard and as such requires that students do just what they seem to fear most: speak in front of the class for an extended period of time about some topic. The kicker is that, it must be in a foreign language!

There's probably nothing that strikes more terror into the well-being of students, and even some adults, than the prospect of having to give a presentation - in front of a group of people - out loud - unassisted - that lasts more than 5 minutes - about something they are supposed to know about. Gasp!

Yet, public speaking is difficult for many of the students in your classroom. Add speaking in a foreign language, and you are guaranteed to have a class full of anxious, scared students. However, this does not have to be the case! No matter the field of study or career, being able to articulate your thoughts clearly is an invaluable asset. Just imagine how much better it would be for students to successfully present in more than one language! What techniques and tips can language students use to ease the fear of public speaking in the target language? From the very first day and every day after that, help your students gain new confidence and skills by teaching your students some of the ideas discussed below.

### Building Confidence and Skills for Public Speaking: The Important Pieces

#### 1. Prepare, prepare, prepare:

Preparation is often times underrated. In fact, preparation arguably is one of the most important components to successful communication through public speaking. When preparing, what should your students be thinking about?

- **Who:** Who is the audience? What are their interests? Needs?
- **What:** What is it that you want them to know? How will you know if you have successfully communicated with them?
- **How:** How can you best transmit your message? What are the nonverbal cues that may add or detract from your presentation? Language is extremely important. Does your presentation have a beginning, middle, and end? Will visual aids help?
- **When:** Timing is also important to your presentation. How is the pace of your speaking? Remember, you do not want to be too fast or too slow. How much time is available?
- **Why:** As the speaker, you should be interested in what you are sharing and you want your audience to be too! In a sense, you must convince them that what you have to say is worth their attention. Remember, you want your audience to not only hear you, but to listen to you, and to remember what you have said.

#### 2. Remember to use eye contact:

You should be able to make a connection with your audience.

#### 3. Consider Handouts:

Handouts are an excellent way to help your audience follow the presentation. Be careful, however, too many handouts can be a distraction, so choose carefully. Handouts should work to guide the listener, or to amplify or demonstrate a point. They should not be a script of your speech.

#### 4. Pay attention to your voice:

You want your audience to be able to hear what you are saying. Also vary your tone and the speed during your presentation. You want them to feel your energy as well as draw in close.

#### 5. Use visual aids:

People like to look at things. Flip charts, overhead projectors, and short video can all be used to make the presentation more memorable. Too much detail or overly technical information might be too confusing and detract from what you are actually trying to say. Above all as teachers, it is necessary to model what we want our students to learn. Do a special presentation in class and explain to your students the technical aspects of your presentation.

### Preparing for the final Presentation

Chances are your students may be overwhelmed by all of the new information on presenting. As the old saying goes, "practice makes perfect." To give your students an opportunity to practice developing a presentation, let them work on their class presentation in groups of two. While working in groups, allow each student to prepare and practice their presentations. Partners can aid each other with the actual content of the presentation, the development of the presentation, or the actual presenting. The group work is designed for peer evaluation and support. Also provide them with a checklist that they will use to evaluate their own presentations.

Once students have an idea of what will be expected of them, have them prepare a 5-minute presentation on their own, one that incorporates the use of notes, visuals, props, and good voice management and body language. A three-step process expanding on the presentation developed during group work will demonstrate to students the value of the various elements and will underscore the importance of practice.

### Planning Verbal Content

The first step is to create an outline, and transfer it to note cards they will consult during their speech. Demonstrating good and bad techniques of voice management and body language will help the students visualize themselves in front of a group. Work with students on how to handle the note cards, how to consult notes without reading, and how to maintain eye contact with the audience, while directing their voice to the audience. This step provides them with the confidence to move forward and include visuals that will help to illustrate and clarify their presentation.

The second step is to prepare a visual, which can take the form of a poster, a set of transparencies, a PowerPoint, or even a short video clip. Work with students on where to place the visual in relationship to where they will be standing, so they do not impede the audience's view. They need to practice pointing to the poster while maintaining eye and voice contact with their audience. Students find that this step takes them away from the relative comfort of a podium and their note cards, so they must know what they are saying, and how they are saying it.

## Practicing with Props

The third step in the presentation might be to add a model into the mix, requiring the students to show or demonstrate the use of an item that is integral to the presentation. Work with students on how to hold this item without obscuring it in their hands. The model may be shown at any time during the speech to increase visual interest.

The result of this three-step process is to provide students with enough contact with their speech, its various parts, and with actual practice, so that the final speech is a success: it covers the material well, it fits into the allotted time space, it includes the audience in the presentation, and it provides a true sense of accomplishment for the student presenter. Final Thoughts.

Starting the very first day of class and continuing every day throughout their course of study, each successive speaking experience our students have will develop confidence and comfort, ultimately creating an individual who is self-assured when presenting information to a group. Regardless of their choice of profession, most of our students at one time or another will be in a position where they will have to speak to a gathering. It might be at work, at church, at a club meeting, or as a Scout leader. Whatever the purpose of public speaking, being able to do so comfortably in more than one language is a real asset we teachers can provide for our students.

Above all, help your students to enjoy the experience. Public speaking is an opportunity to share with others. Remind your students they have a voice and others can benefit from their input. Help your students to realize that public speaking does not have to be a chore, but can be a fun, educational, and informative experience.

These are some suggestions for checklist/guidelines to give students while preparing their presentation.

Question	Yes	No
Did I speak clearly?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Was the audience able to hear me?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did I speak at the right pace?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did I make eye contact with the audience?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did I connect with the audience?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did I Use visual aids? Hand-outs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**What do you think the strengths of your presentation are?**

**What do you think the weaknesses of your presentation are?**

If possible, videotape students while they are presenting. Seeing themselves on video will allow them to have a better sense of what their presenting styles and strengths are.

This is a possible guide that can be used to help students prepare for their presentations.

1. Stand erect, feet planted squarely on the floor.
2. Stand in one place.
3. Keep gestures calm and contained.
4. Speak loudly enough to be heard over entire space.
5. Speak at a speed appropriate for the audience and purpose.
6. Speak with appropriate phrasing.
7. Speak with appropriate intonation.
8. Enunciate words clearly.
9. Pronounce words correctly.
10. Use correct grammar.
11. Use a vocabulary equal to the audience.
12. Provide an appropriate list of vocabulary.
13. Maintain good eye contact with the audience.
14. Move cards in an unobtrusive manner.
15. Use 4" x 6" or 5" x 8" note cards.
16. Place poster where all can easily see it.
17. Avoid standing between poster and the audience.
18. Use a pointer/pointing stick/laser.
19. Hold pointer steady at area to be identified.
20. Maintain proper eye contact with audience.
21. Directs voice to audience.
22. Poster supports speech.
23. Poster layout is uncluttered.
24. Poster layout is visually appealing.
25. Poster contains correct grammar.
26. Poster contains correct spelling.
27. Poster vocabulary is appropriate.
28. Introduce item to be shown.
29. Hold item to be shown so that hands do not cover/block view.
30. Item is large enough for audience to see.
31. Item supports/adds to the speech.
32. Continue speaking while showing/demonstrating.
33. Show item to entire audience.
34. Length of speech.

See also the responses for our November question: [How do you have students prepare for giving presentations in class?](#) and the For your classroom article on [Using Technology with Presentations](#).

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## Lend Me an Ear - Teaching Listening Strategies for World Language Learning

By Jill Robbins

**SBI approach to learning tasks:**



This month we examine the National Standard of Foreign Language Learning relating to Interpretive Communication. Interpretive Communication refers to the understanding of material that is read or heard. Often language teachers do not use recorded materials because students react with dismay; "I can't understand a thing!" When a teacher gives support before the listening task



through instruction in strategies, students are able to break down the flow of sound into comprehensible language. The strategies-based instruction (SBI) approach developed by Cohen (1998) can be summarized with the graphic shown here. Students are guided to apply strategies before, during and after a language task. If students are supported through these three phases of a task with learning strategies, they can successfully finish the task and develop their own repertoire of strategies to apply to other learning contexts. To develop listening comprehension skills while expanding social studies knowledge, the Spanish teacher can use a foreign language podcast, such as our Culture Club [Teen Hangout podcast](#) to provide authentic language models and listening content. The following lesson plan follows the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach ([CALLA-FL](#)), which integrates language, content, and learning strategies instruction.

#### Preparation:

At the beginning of class, the teacher begins by asking students in Spanish what they know about Puerto Rico. What languages are spoken there? Is it part of the United States? Where is it? She guides students to a map to see the location of the island and shows a photo of a typical scene from a travel web page. Next, she asks students to think about how they usually get information when they are listening – perhaps they listen for specific words, as when the sports report is on and they hear the name of their favorite team, then take note of the game score. She confirms the fact that they already have some strategies for listening, which they can apply to listening in Spanish, too.

#### Presentation:

The teacher explains that she will play a short excerpt from the beginning of the podcast and show a strategy to use *before* she listens. I'm going to listen to the beginning of this podcast to find out who is speaking, and why they made the podcast. This strategy is setting a goal. I'm also using what I know about podcasts because I know that at the beginning there is usually an introduction telling who is speaking and why they made the podcast." She opens up the application iTunes on her computer and makes sure the speakers are turned on, then selects the Podcasts section and the "NCLRC Language Resource" then "Culture Club Hangout Interview" and forwards to :24 seconds into the podcast, where Adrian introduces himself in Spanish. She plays the segment to :55 seconds. "While I listen to this, I am thinking, 'I should hear a name.' I *did* hear a name, the interviewer is Adrian. Now that I have heard this, I can summarize for you by saying, 'This podcast is for teachers and students of Spanish, and it will be an interview with a young woman who is from Argentina but lives in Peru.' I'm going to use one more strategy here: after listening, I can personalize by thinking of how useful this will be to me in classes; I can let you hear native speakers of Spanish talking about their lives. I'm also thinking about how useful it is for you to hear different accents in Spanish from the young man, who is from Puerto Rico, and the young woman, who is from Argentina."

#### Practice:

Now, the teacher hands out the list of questions in Spanish. She directs students to read the questions and think of what they want to know about the student in Puerto Rico. Are they interested in fashions? If so, they might pay special attention to questions 19 – 21 (using iTunes the teacher can go directly to those questions by choosing the top menu for "Chapters" and selecting the question.) Or, if they want to know what Natalia thinks about the US or American food, they would choose to focus on the responses to questions 25 and 26. The teacher displays a list or gives students a handout with the strategy reminders:

Use one or more of these strategies:

**BEFORE LISTENING:** [Think of What I Know](#), [Set a goal](#)

**WHILE LISTENING:** [Focus on Key words](#)

**AFTER LISTENING:** [Summarize](#), then [Personalize It - Make it My Own](#)

She reminds students to begin by setting a goal, and then plays the podcast through once. Then, she asks students which questions they want to hear again, and uses the Chapters menu to select and play those questions and responses. After they have heard the answers, she asks them to summarize by telling their neighbor in Spanish about what they learned. She suggests that they can draw a picture of a young person in the styles that Natalia described, or make a statement to Personalize, such as "*A mi me gusta escuchar música con el ipod.*" A student interested in politics may comment on Natalia's opinions about American foreign policy, "*Los Estados Unidos son una democracia generosa que ayuda a todos.*"

#### Self-Evaluation:

When the class has finished discussing the podcast, the teacher asks them to think about the goals they have set for themselves. "Were you able to meet your goal? Write an entry in your learning journal about how you could understand what you were listening to. Did using the strategy that you chose help you to remember or understand what you heard? What other times can you use it?"

#### Expansion:

The teacher asks her class to try using the same strategy in the evening when they listen to Univision or a Spanish radio station. She gives them a list of podcasts that they can download for their own practice, and asks them to summarize something they have listened to at home in Spanish for the next class.

One way to expand this lesson into mainstream content classes would be a collaboration with the Social Studies teacher. Students could have the opportunity to continue learning about Puerto Rico and practicing their listening strategies as they watch a movie, *La Guagua Aérea*, (IMDB: <http://imdb.com/title/tt0143284/>) about Puerto Rican Immigration to the US. The Social Studies teacher might discuss the film contents in English, and plays segments which have subtitles in English. The Spanish teacher could give her students the assignment to respond to the movie in Spanish.

In conclusion, teaching listening comprehension strategies can give students the tools they need to be successful in language learning, and provide motivation for students to understand authentic, interesting content.

#### [Download Podcast Transcript](#)

For a complete list of language learning strategies, see [http://nclrc.org/about\\_teaching/topics/lang\\_learn\\_strat.html](http://nclrc.org/about_teaching/topics/lang_learn_strat.html)

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## Getting Students to Talk in the Target Language

By [Sheila Cockey](#), President, American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese (AATSP) Virginia Chapter

The "Strand of the Month" for September is interpersonal communication and I'd like to focus on the oral portion of this strand. What are some ways to engage and involve our students with oral conversation from the very beginning? What are some ways to continue that exciting entrée through the year and through their career as language learners?



### Gathering material:



Pay attention to what the students are talking about as they come in to class, stand in the hallway, or chat in the cafeteria. Listen carefully without being intrusive and always remain aware of confidentiality. Just get a sense of the topics that are capturing their interest on any given day.

Do this every day so your ideas stay current. Students can smell a stale idea almost before it formulates in your mind. Get them to talk about these subjects in the TL by asking questions of a general nature that touch on the topics. Develop debates on the more controversial topics. Look to the Internet for interactive ideas; there are many great websites out there that can give you wonderful inspiration.

Find pictures to use as conversation stimuli. Ads in magazines are an excellent source since they provide a current context for the exchange. There are several excellent books of conversation drawings available as well, but my students like the quirky advertisement pictures best.

### Providing information:



Leave room for students to ask questions. Be sure to provide sufficient information, in the form of a rubric for a formal assessment or in a list of "be sure to include ..." if it is a less formal situation, so that students know what you expect from them. Always encourage them to ask for further details. They need to learn to seek information and to manipulate those interrogatives.

If students have good control of the interrogatives, they will soon discover that they can control the conversation, making responses more predictable and manageable. They will become good conversationalists and good reporters of what they have heard.

### Creating opportunities:



Everyday every student should have as much time as possible to speak the language. Working in pairs, or small groups, provides lots of opportunity for speaking and communicating. Take the vocabulary out of the book and make the language become a real means of communication. Insist on the use of interrogatives in these paired encounters. Not all of these conversations need to be graded for anything other than doing it.

Provide the students with a word bank and ask them to role play a conversation about the vocabulary topic. Be sure to include all parts of speech in the word bank you provide. Make up two lists of vocabulary that are different, but from the same lesson. Distribute the lists so that each partnership has list A and list B. Student A must use the words in List A, while Student B must use the words on List B during their conversation. Switch lists and do another conversation with the same words. Students will be surprised at the difference in the two conversations.

There should be a reasonable combination of impromptu and prepared conversations. Those that are impromptu can be practice situations with new material that lead them to the ability to do a prepared conversation (skit) at the end of the lesson. However, some of the impromptu exercises should be graded. Encouraging students to think on their feet is a necessary step to successful real-life conversations.



Be sure students understand these are communicative exercises and not just exercises in making up random sentences that use specific words. Start with a list of 6 to 8 words and expand it as their confidence grows.

Create high-energy locations for the simulations by locating the situations in places where the students engage in their preferred after-school activities. You don't have to wait for the adventure vocabulary to have a getting-to-know-you conversation.



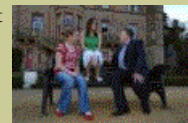
### Create a natural simulation:



The students spend a great deal of time with their friends on the internet. Bring those writing exchanges and experiences into the oral realm and have them do some web-cam conversations. This can be accomplished within your classroom if your school has firewall and safety issues you need to accommodate. Web cams are inexpensive, easy to install, and easy to operate. Students will enjoy the visual dimension of their on-line conversations.

### Creating the assignments:

When you are creating assignments for the students, keep in mind the proficiency aspect of your expectations. You want them to be actively engaged in using the material (words, structure, and concepts) to communicate their ideas. Vary these culminating activities so they take different forms. With this type of activity there is really no right or wrong answer, so encourage students to express their opinions.



Remember to include cultural behaviors that appear in an oral communication: things such as personal space, register, eye contact, gestures, and posture are all part of how one person communicates with another.



**Building a community of trust** is paramount to successful language learning. When the students understand that they will not be criticized, or laughed at, when they make mistakes they will be much more willing to try. Remind them of how they learned to ride a bike, play an instrument, or play a sport. It all takes repetition and learning from mistakes to become better at it. Start them on the first day with the simple phrases and keep building so that they find it natural to speak only the TL in the classroom and with particular individuals. Sharing your mistakes with them will go a long way toward raising the comfort level. Give some examples of how you chose a wrong word (maybe a false cognate?) that led to a completely different, and perhaps embarrassing, message. When they realize that even the teacher makes mistakes, the students relax.

The real key here is to keep students talking, in controlled and uncontrolled situations. The teacher doesn't always have to be the leader; give the students an opportunity to talk about anything they wish. The only requirement is that it must be in the TL. Give a very reasonable, easy to achieve time frame, and let them exceed that limit before you stop them. Reward them by letting them know they talked for "twice as long" as you had asked them to talk!



This month's [Dear YANA](#) column has a lot of specific examples to get you started on helping your students become more comfortable and more eager to use their new language.

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## Guitars in the Classroom: High-Yield, Song-Based Learning



Song-based learning is a powerful tool for language development, and even more so when it comes to learning a second language. Many teachers already know the variety of ways music can enhance the classroom experience; building confidence and community, facilitating academic tasks involving memory, vocabulary, and much more. Guitars in the Classroom (GITC), <http://www.guitarsintheclassroom.com> is a non-profit, California based, national program, operating under the auspices of the Community Initiative Funds of The San Francisco Foundation <http://www.cifunds.org/>. GITC brings music into public elementary and middle schools by offering regular classroom teachers free guitar, music education, song leadership, and music integration lessons through regionally based training programs. Jessica Anne Baron, M.A. founded and directs Guitars in the Classroom. We had the opportunity to talk with Jessica and want to share with you her excitement about how this program may contribute to language teaching.



Jessica Anne Baron

Baron has worked across the curriculum with teachers of ESL and Spanish in the Elementary and Junior High levels. The guitar work tends to be with teachers of younger kids, as the songs are simple and appealing to younger students. Teachers find, Baron says, that learning to play a guitar is "absolutely the most helpful thing - having the instrument in their hands give them more control - they can adapt the pace and sculpt the song lyric according to what they teach." Another aspect of this empowerment is that after learning to sing the songs, the kids start writing lyrics themselves. "The teachers then get their students to sing the songs for other kids. The music helps memory but also is an outreach to the rest of the community. It's really a grassroots approach that introduces making music in a very fun spirit."

Guitars in the Classroom developed from a method Baron created called Smart Start Guitar - she started in 1998 to produce a simple method of teaching guitar to little kids. The kids couldn't read, so she created an auditory-kinesthetic method of teaching guitar. This utilizes Open G guitar tuning called slack-key tuning. The learners add one finger at a time, working on coordination. There is no pressure, and no practice required. Teachers take the guitars into their classrooms in the first week, and the students love it! Like a 'Fun night out.' First six week course is free, after that students are asked to contribute the cost of instruction. Materials are provided for free. There are a number of books which Baron has published, available at :

<http://songsforteaching.com/guitarsintheclassroom/songbookseds.htm> One especially meant for bilingual educators is: <http://www.songsforteaching.com/store/product.php?productid=4068&cat=481&page=3> Guitarra De SmartStart – Método y Cancionero / SmartStart Guitar Method and Songbook



All Smiles



Longmont Teachers

Baron writes that "music's "total engagement" carries two social bonuses for certain students. One is the inclusion of movement in the classroom setting, something some kids crave and rarely find an acceptable way to do during class time. Whether they are rocking, shaking a shaker, strumming a guitar, clapping hands, or stepping in a circle around the perimeter of the room, kids who learn best while in motion get more chances when music is incorporated."

Baron finds that another bonus of using music "is evidenced when children whose special need to be seen and appreciated by teachers is met. If a teacher invites a lonely or marginalized child to take a solo or join a small group to perform for others, her desire for recognition can be channeled into healthy expression, and the dynamics of the class can actually improve for everyone."

The classes are spreading - it's not hard to start a program. If you want to start a program in your area, contact GITC, <http://www.guitarsintheclassroom.org/contact.php> and they will help you. Remember, these programs are for training teachers. Anyone who can sing and play guitar can participate in the program as an instructor.

Materials are donated by manufacturer partners, companies such as Godin Guitars, Martin Guitars, Samick Guitars, Dunlop Manufacturing and D'Addario String Co, among others, and instruction is partially subsidized by NAMM, The International Music Products Association.

**For your Classroom** you can download: [Using Music in World Language Performance Assessment](#).

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### Worthwhile ... Positive ... Rewarding ... Effective ... Giving ... Helpful ... Valuable.

By Sheila Cockey

Wouldn't it be wonderful to hear a series of adjectives like these used to describe a travel experience you devised for your students? It can be if you go beyond the normal routes of student travel and look for opportunities to place your students directly in a community doing hands-on activities. These kinds of activities do not focus on the tourist spring break trip, or on the home stay and language class version. Rather, they send students into a community to live and interact with the residents, working together to accomplish a goal. That goal might be a construction or renovation project, teaching reading or English, installing a water system, teaching crafts for marketing in the US, providing medical care, or a thousand other projects designed to help communities grow and gain independence.

While it is true that many of these types of experiences are organized and sponsored by churches, with a bit of research you can find other sponsoring, non-denominational, organizations. Try looking for specific types of programs in specific countries. For example, put the phrase "volunteer in Xcountry" in a search engine and see what appears. Sometimes there are personal acquaintances that can send you on the right track. Perhaps you know somebody who has a direct connection with a community that has a need. Talk over possibilities for your students with them. Maybe you can design your own program. Carefully check out any organization and program that you find interesting before proposing it to your students.

Here are some quick examples of volunteer, community service projects that students have participated in, including a bit about the project and a picture of the work.

## San Miguel de Allende Mexico



This group consisted of about 12 students, a teacher, and a parent. They spent their spring break working at an orphanage where one of the students and her father had volunteered previously. The students painted walls, refurbished the laundry facility, and set up a trampoline. In their free time, with the children who live in the orphanage, they played soccer and jumped on the trampoline. One of the results of their stay at the orphanage was the purchase of a truck the director uses to pick up food and to take the children on excursions. The group hopes to continue their association with a fund raising campaign to purchase needed improvements for the kitchen, including a new stove and hot water heater. In their on-going efforts to help the orphanage, the students are in contact with the people there. Having seen the facility and talked with the staff and residents, decisions about what kinds of



things they can do are made mutually and for the benefit of the orphanage. These students have a continuing direct immersion experience where they are able to see the positive effects of their work immediately.

## Honduras



The purpose of this project was to help lay a pipeline from the main water line into a village in the highlands. After a 6-hour bus ride from Tegucigalpa, the road ended and the group had to hike the rest of the way to the village. For a week, a group of students and adults carried PVC pipe up the mountainside, laid and attached piping, and ended up with a source of water in the village where there had been none previously. After the water "system" was installed and working, the women no longer had to spend hours each day going down the mountain to collect water to carry back up to the village. Volunteers trained the villagers in how to make the water safe for drinking. In addition to the knowledge that not everybody has safe, running water in their home, the experience fostered among this group awareness of the need to help others less fortunate than we are, and many continue to return to some



sort of service project on a regular basis.

## Near Quetzaltenango, Guatemala



The first time the group went to Guatemala, they spent time in a highlands village building stoves. In the traditional Maya house, the cooking fire/stove is inside the home, with no ventilation to the outside. Because of the health risks associated with this, the sponsoring organization worked with the local people to plan a course of action. People with the technical knowledge and skills would come to help teach the villagers how to build and maintain stoves that are safely vented to the outside. As with all of these projects, time with the children was always set aside. Volunteers and villagers worked together for a week, learning about each other in the process. Although the common language was Spanish, many students came away with a small vocabulary of Maya words as well. The 2006 project was once again in the western highlands of Guatemala. This time the purpose was two-fold. Most of the group helped to

build new homes to replace those destroyed by Hurricane Stan in 2005. The remainder worked with the local women, teaching them knitting techniques and helping with deciding what items would be marketable in the US. These women have no other source of income and the knitting project will help them to become self-sufficient.

## Santa Rosa de Copán, Honduras



Medical volunteers are desperately needed everywhere around the world and there are many organizations that sponsor volunteer teams. One in particular focuses on Central America, with offices in Honduras. In addition to health screening and treatment, this particular organization builds medical facilities, including a prosthetic clinic, they repair wheelchairs, and they conduct professional growth seminars for health care providers. They not only provide medical care; they provide instruction in diet and good health, literacy, and computer use and maintenance. The volunteers spend a lot of time at orphanages playing with the children, who do not get a lot of attention from outsiders. One major project that has had a very positive impact on the entire region is the



construction of a gymnasium that is used by everyone for sports and physical fitness. As in all projects of this type, translators are desperately needed and one need not be fluent to be of use.

Although these four capsules only touch the surface of what is available in Latin America, it is very easy to find similar projects in other parts of the world. Language skills improved and in every case, participants came away with a much better understanding of the problems facing a developing nation. As one participant stated, "During the time I spent volunteering there, I did learn a lot about life in third world countries, and about myself. My Spanish got so much better and my confidence in speaking Spanish increased, too." In addition, knowledge about the indigenous cultures brought a new respect for these people in the minds of the volunteers.

This is an experience that doesn't just happen for a week while students are in the locale; it is an experience that starts months before with preparation and extends for months after with follow-up and continued contact with the people. The key to any successful learning experience is to involve the students before, during, and after the experience. Preparation for what they will be doing, what they will be seeing, hearing, tasting, and smelling, for what the expectations are, for how to behave in specific circumstances will help insure that the in-country experience will be a positive one. Researching the type of project you choose, the qualifications for the volunteers, the support services provided to the volunteers, the living arrangements, and the travel arrangements are of paramount importance. While in the country regular conversations with your students about what they are thinking and feeling will help them sort out conflicting emotions and reactions. If students are kept busy all day, there is less likelihood of something going bad. Start and/or end your time with an opportunity to tour some of the more famous landmarks of the country. This will provide a point of departure with others who did not go on the trip, but will ask, "What did you see?" Follow-up should include some time where students are able to express their emotions about what they have seen and done. Time to organize continued contact with the people they had such an intense experience and with whom they accomplished a specific goal may also be appropriate.

Whatever you choose to do, if it is planned well, the students are well prepared, and there is sufficient support provided to them while there, your choice of a community service learning experience in another country will be a positive and memorable experience for your students.

## Las Voces de las Mujeres: An Ethnographic Approach to Listening

Tess Lane

Assistant Professor of Spanish and TESL  
Hawaii's Pacific University



*Las Voces de las Mujeres* is an ongoing project to bring the voices of women of Latin America and Iberia to students of Spanish through streaming video on the internet. The project is available free of charge and hosted at San Diego State University's Language Acquisition Resource Center's (LARC) Digital Media Archive ([larc.sdsu.edu/voces](http://larc.sdsu.edu/voces)). In addition, a 2-dvd set of interviews with women from Guatemala can be purchased from the National Foreign Language Resource Center (NFLRC) at University of Hawai'i Manoa ([nflrc.hawaii.edu/publications.cfm](http://nflrc.hawaii.edu/publications.cfm)) for \$25.00. Videotaped interviews were conducted in 2003 with 20 women in Quetzaltenango, Guatemala, in 2005 with 20 women in Morelia, Michoacán, México, and most recently in Donostia, País Vasco, and Tarapoto, Peru (available in 2007).

This growing video archive presents the views, values, and choices of women of many ages (10 to 78), backgrounds, and professions by asking each woman the same set of seven open-ended questions in Spanish:

1. *Introducción*. Introduction, description of family, profession, personality.
2. *¿Cuáles son las tres cosas más importantes en su vida? ¿Por qué son importantes?* What are the three most important things in your life, and why are they important?
3. *¿Qué problemas tiene en su vida? ¿Qué hace para resolverlos?* What problems do you have? How are you trying to resolve these problems?
4. *¿Cuáles son los valores más importantes que aprendió Ud. de su madre? ¿Cómo pasa estos valores a otras personas?* What values did you learn from your mother? How do you pass these values to others?
5. *¿Hay una experiencia que me pueda contar que tuvo un impacto fuerte en su vida?* Is there an experience you can tell me about that had a strong impact on your life?
6. *¿Qué espera para su futuro? ¿el futuro de su familia? ¿el futuro de su país?* What do you hope for your own future, the future of your family, and the future of your country?
7. *Si tuviera la oportunidad de hacer cualquier cosa, sin importar el dinero, ¿Qué haría?* If you could do anything, and money didn't matter, what would you do?

### The goals of this project are to:

1. Help students explore the female views of cultures with an inductive approach.
2. Provide students with repetitive, structured, and student-controlled listening practice.
3. Provide a model for an ethnographic approach to learning language and culture.

These listening materials are different from most recorded interviews in that they provide students with many voices answering the same set of questions. Responses contain many of the same vocabulary words and structures, which provides repetition and restatement in listening practice, and exposes students to regional varieties of Spanish. Students can listen to an entire interview of one particular woman, or compare all of the women's answers to one question.

Students should answer the questions themselves before listening to the interviews and share their own answers with classmates. The sharing of both personal answers and later summary and analysis by students of the women's answers helps to create a social context and builds community in the classroom. This activity is a challenge for some students, as these are not questions most U.S. students have thought about. By answering the questions and sharing their answers in class before listening to Las Voces interviews, students also activate important vocabulary and grammar structures that are needed to express their answers in Spanish. The teacher also can use class discussion of the students' own answers to help students analyze which questions generate answers that are shared by many students (shared cultural values) and which questions seem to solicit different answers (individual variation). This type of analysis serves as a model for drawing careful generalizations.

The future of Las Voces project is secure, thanks to a commitment from LARC at San Diego State University, to host the project on a video-streaming internet server. I am now collaborating with two San Diego State Univ. faculty, Hanada Taha-Thomure and Huma Ghoshat, to expand the project to include Women's Voices in Urdu, Farsi, and Arabic.

- Access Las Voces free of charge at: [larc.sdsu.edu/voces](http://larc.sdsu.edu/voces)
- Worksheets and methodology for using Las Voces at various levels at: [nflrc.hawaii.edu/voces/](http://nflrc.hawaii.edu/voces/)
- Las Voces Guatemala interviews published in 2-DVD set by NFLRC (2005). [nflrc.hawaii.edu/voces/](http://nflrc.hawaii.edu/voces/).
- Questions, comments, and worksheets to use with Las Voces should be directed to Tess Lane at [tlane@hpu.edu](mailto:tlane@hpu.edu).

## Spanish Honor Society Benefits Students and Sponsors

by Christy Joria

Georgetown Visitation Preparatory School



Christy Joria

A couple of years ago I attended the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese annual meeting for the first time, and a friend urged me to go to the workshop led by the leaders of the *Sociedad Honoraria Hispánica (SHH)* a national Spanish Honor Society. He told me that the directors were very friendly and encouraging, and he was right. At the meeting, sponsors of chapters all over the US got together to report on the activities of each chapter. Some were incredibly active, while others were less so. Everyone was brimming with enthusiasm and creative ways to get students of Spanish to use the language outside the classroom. I sat there thinking it might be worthwhile for me to charter a chapter. Finally the editor of the SHH literary magazine got up to make her report. *iAlbricias!*, the SHH literary magazine, publishes student essays, poetry, and drawings on a quarterly basis. She said that the magazine was particularly in need of good essays, and she urged us to have our students submit compositions, telling us that they would very likely be published. That did it for me. I had just finished teaching a Spanish III Honors course, and I had some very good writers in class, so I thought I would take the plunge and start a chapter. It was one of the best decisions

of my career.

Chartering a chapter of SHH is easy. The forms can be downloaded from the SHH website, [www.sociedadhonorariahispanica.org](http://www.sociedadhonorariahispanica.org), and the one-time fee is only \$25. Each SHH sponsor receives a copy of *iAlbricias!* each quarter, along with a *becas* packet in December describing the various awards offered to teachers and students. Students are eligible for membership in SHH after their freshman year. They are required to be honors students in Spanish, but the society is flexible enough to let each school set its own standards for admission. Students pay \$5 one time when they are invited to join the organization, and once they are members they are eligible to contribute to the literary magazine, and compete for scholarships and free trips.

The first year I launched our *Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz* chapter of SHH I didn't know exactly what to expect, but my students were very enthusiastic about being invited to join the group, and they brainstormed activities. In order to raise funds for service activities, we sponsored several Taco Tuesdays at school, for which the members of SHH would each bring in a major ingredient of taco salads, and we sold them at lunch for \$5 each, which covered a taco salad, rice, dessert, and a drink. The whole school loves taco salad, so we were able to raise enough money to offer scholarships to two students who were going to Oaxaca on a summer study program. We also put together a Day of the Dead altar, with a poster explaining this Mexican tradition and its connection to our celebration of All Saints Day and All Souls Day. We sold skull pops at lunch to get the rest of the school involved. In the springtime, we sent a group of SHH students and other Spanish students into downtown DC to the Organization of American States to help with their annual Food Fest. Each OAS member nation sets up a booth and sells food and drinks, and our students sold tickets used to buy the various dishes. They got a chance to use their Spanish in a festive atmosphere, with people from all over the world.



Mrs. Christy Joria and students at the Day of the Dead Altar

Since our chapter was launched, we have had several of our members have their original work published in *iAlbricias!* The first year, our president wrote an essay about her impressions of Oaxaca. Last year, a student published an essay describing an orphan she met while on a service trip to Peru. Another student wrote a poem about the tango, and one of our members contributed a beautiful drawing of a Peruvian horse. I was surprised and delighted at the range of talent among our members. I had no idea that Gelsie was a talented artist, although I'd taught her in class. The fact that *iAlbricias!* publishes work in a variety of creative endeavors means that sponsors can tap into their students' wide-ranging interests and talents. Each item that is published is printed with a biography of the student and his or her picture, and contributors receive a copy of the publication, and a check for \$35 for their work.



Left to Right: Christy Joria, Ana Maria Videz, a guide from Mexico, Karen Campion (our SHH president this year), and Judy Park, one of the two national SHH directors

Each year the sponsors of SHH chapters are invited to nominate one junior and one senior for special SHH awards. The national SHH organization awards twelve \$2000 scholarships and forty \$1000 scholarships to outstanding seniors, to be used for college expenses. In addition, the SHH awards 20 Junior Travel Awards. The national directors take a group of 20 outstanding juniors from around the country on a 10-day, all expense paid trip in July through a Spanish-speaking country. Last summer I was fortunate that my student Karen Campion was one of the students chosen for the trip. She flew to Chicago, where she met the directors and the other participants, and they traveled to Mexico City, Taxco, Teotihuacan, Guadalajara and other cities. Karen is our president of SHH this year, and she came away from the trip sparked with enthusiasm for SHH and filled with new ideas she had gleaned from SHH activities described by the other participants.

This year our chapter of SHH has sponsored a Day of the Dead activity for our Saturday School, an enrichment program for inner city students. We met with a group of 7th graders and helped them make tissue paper skull masks and flowers, which later adorned our Day of the Dead altar. Our Taco Tuesdays continue to raise money for good causes. We are sponsoring the travel fees needed by a Honduran girl in the little town of Cerrón

to pay a truck driver to drive her from her town to the high school and back each day. We recently sent money to the Religious Teachers Filippini, a group of nuns working in Brazil to prevent prostitution of very young girls by removing them from their families and teaching them to sew, and giving them sewing machines, so they will be more valuable to their families as seamstresses than they would be as prostitutes. We have finally saved enough money to sponsor a Salsa Mixer, which will be held in the spring, and we are hoping to sponsor salsa lessons before the mixer.

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The Language Resource had the pleasure of talking with one of the founders of the National Museum of Language in College Park, Maryland the other day. Amelia Murdoch told us about plans for the museum and how language teachers can get involved. This museum promises to be a great resource for all of us who work in the language field.



**Amelia Murdoch**

**LR:** How did the idea come about for a Museum of Language?

**AM:** Well, this is on our website, <http://languagemuseum.org/history.htm> but I'll tell you about it.

I worked at the National Security Agency and I was on an advisory group to a top administrator who was in charge of research, who was also responsible for linguistic matters. The advisory group would complain to him that administrators didn't understand the problems of linguists.

One Air Force Colonel was told it took ten years to train a linguist, and he said, "Why, that's as long as it takes to train a pilot!" He seemed to think that linguists could be trained overnight. Another time we were trying to compile glossaries, and one manager said, "Why do you need somebody to buy your dictionaries?" - not realizing that we had world-wide responsibilities. For example, an African language might have a dictionary that was written in the 1940s that would be inadequate to today's needs. The language guru, as we call him, George Vergine, he said, "Why don't you have a language fair?" The graphics dept offered to do the entire exhibit for us, and it was successful because it was visually oriented, simplified. Each exhibit was unclassified but it illustrated a problem that was common to our work.

The effect of that exhibit on people when they first saw it was so outstanding, that it made us think we ought to do it on a museum scale. This was a way to reach people who do not understand the many aspects of language, that it changes, not in terms of years, but daily, and to illustrate that some languages are related, that it's better to train people in related languages, and that in some countries, knowing one language is not enough, but you have to learn three languages, as in African countries where you have the national language, and the tribal language, and a colonial language.

When we did the language fair, the agency paid to have it put on display at the Greenbelt Armory for four days, and they paid to have the high school kids bussed in to see the exhibit. We found that some language teachers did not have a background in language - they were hired because they were native speakers of the language but they didn't have much knowledge of language. We realized the teachers needed to have these concepts just as much as the kids did.

So we worked on it over the years, and in 1985 some of us were going to go to the Smithsonian, but no one wanted to do enough work to get it in shape to present to the Smithsonian. In '97 I decided we had to get it together. When a group met, we decided to do it ourselves, not to go through the bureaucracy. Once we have it established, we may offer it to the Smithsonian, but we wanted to get the job done, that's how we felt.

**LR:** On the website and in the newsletter there's a picture of a building. Where would that be?



**AM:** We hired a young architectural student; we told him the site we wanted, and we're trying to get a museum complex started near the Metro stop in College Park. That area has been designated as a museum complex by the city of College Park, There's an aviation museum there now. We'd get a developer to build a complex centered around the language museum. Now we can't ask for anything for exhibits because we don't have storage space. We consider that an interim building. The young man who designed it did it as his master's project. He was working with a specialist in museum design. It's a serious effort by us to look to the future. But it requires a great deal of money and political clout. It's hard to get sites the public will agree with. We'll have to develop more public sentiment about the museum.

**LR:** It's a beautiful building. Right now the exhibits in the museum

**AM:** They are very minor.

**LR:** I see you have some language lab equipment.

**AM:** We really don't have anything yet. We have two rooms in the office building now, one has information about our programs, and the other has information on the museum itself, the building and the site. I'd like to have somebody design the program room so when you walk in it looks like a museum. We need more helping hands. The website, I think, is shaping up. That seems to be the place where the action is now, and where people want to help.

**LR:** What's your ideal museum exhibit?

**AM:** We have decided on **major themes**  
Universal Aspects of Language  
Language in Society  
Languages of the World

I'm working on the area of Language in Society - one of the things you can see in the US is in place names - the Indians have moved but the

names of places have remained. We might start with the states' names – that's something everyone can relate to.

I've been talking with people about this since 1971, and if you talk to someone long enough, you discover that everybody has some special interest in language. When I talk about language I'm not just talking about conjugating verbs, and linguistics. People who are professional linguists often think of linguistics as being the subject, but the subject is really language. Language is so much a part of everything we do – language is technology, it's the invention of the telephone, it's the invention of the radio, it's the study of the brain, and linguists do all of these things, but language is a larger study than the study of linguistics. I want the public to come in and see 'how does the brain process language?' I want two figures, because I want one to talk and one to listen, to show what happens when you speak, what goes on in the brain, how the ears operate, how the eyes operate, I want to show problems with hearing; what the brain is doing. This is not health; it's all language. This huge battle at Gallaudet University is a language battle.

**LR:** What do you envision being a good exhibit in your new building? What would be interesting to the average ten year old?

**AM:** One topic that stood out as we talked to people about this museum is the Linguistic Heritage of America. I think it should show each of the foreign language elements that came to this country and where they went. And the food – think of the Latino food that is available here now.

The British wanted to have a "World of Language" museum, but they were looking to focus on the history of the English language. We could not make that the center of ours, because a lot of people in America would say, "I don't care two hoots about the history of the English Language". They are more interested in their linguistic heritage, what the contribution is of that language.

**LR:** That's the main feature of our culture, the diversity.

**AM:** Absolutely, and that's what we say – we want to show how all of these linguistics groups have come to America and contributed to our literature... I'd like to have an author in residence, who'd stay for a year. We could have workshops with children. I'd like to have a separate hall for the Young Linguists. It would replicate what we are doing for the adults but at a child's level. They'd have things on the floor, maybe maps, and writing and poetry workshops.

**LR:** My friend's kids are really interested in different writing systems, and play with plastic Japanese or Chinese characters.

**AM:** What I want to have is displays on the various writing systems – and the evolution of writing instruments. You could have things so they could see what is the difference between a fountain pen and a quill pen.

**LR:** And a typewriter! Most of them have never seen a typewriter before.

**AM:** At ACTFL last year, we had a typewriter and everyone was drawn to it. People say, language is no intangible, but language is responsible for much of technology. It's all interrelated. People don't realize that, but a huge amount of technology today is oriented toward language. People want to see it faster, they want to see it clearer, or they want to have more fonts. One of the items we have listed under the Universal Aspects of Language refers to the recording of language. Everybody, I don't care how smart or well educated they were, said, "Well, I hope you're gonna have writing, too." She laughed. "What do you mean, records were originally written records!" That shocked me – this shows how language has evolved in society - they think of records as oral. In England, the history of the country is in the Hall of Records; births and deaths and all of that is in the Hall of Records.

I want to include both first language and second language acquisition. It's important for people to come in and understand how kids learn. I want to have an explanation of the body as a language machine, with the brain as the control – how the ears work, how the eyes work, how your breath, how the lungs work, sign language, of course – the theory is, of course, that the use of the hands was essential in the beginning, in the origins of language – that it's always been a part of language.

**LR:** I've always felt that gesture is very important.

**AM:** Yes, that's it – there's something in us that if you tied your hands and you couldn't use them....

**LR:** You'd have trouble talking!

**AM:** I heard a lecture once by a woman who had this theory – and every thing was a gesture. That's part of the universal aspect of language. You have the language machine – the physical and psychological functioning of the body. And then of course, the recording of language. It's essential to being human. The fact that we are able to record language has changed the world.

**LR:** What kind of action would you like our readers to take if they want to support the museum?

**AM:** You can go to our website and let us know if you have a suggestion for a simple display, (we don't have room for anything large) if you have a small display that you would like to design or build if necessary – if you'd need things like newspapers or writing instruments you'd have to gather those yourself. We'd also like donations and for people to **become members**. And remember us in your will.

**LR:** I think a lot of the foreign language teachers have probably been doing this kind of thing to inform people...

**AM:** Yes, the teachers are our best source of ideas. Not the linguistic scholar, who might not be able to put it into a workable idea of how to present it. But schoolteachers have. They're used to doing this, they've been doing this for their constituents, for their students.

**LR:** To convey the importance of language.

**AM:** I've been disappointed that more of them have not stepped forward. I think that we can do more in terms of educating people in all walks of life. I'd like the museum to eventually become the ultimate place for the endangered languages of the world. Wouldn't it be wonderful? If you have a museum that's dedicated to language, that's the place to have the endangered languages, not the Library of Congress – once we're really established and have a few million dollars, we'd ask them to donate some of the materials they have so scholars can come. I see the museum as a place for anybody who wants to know something about language, and they don't know where to go. When I was a sophomore in high school and I was asked what I wanted to do, I said I wanted to be a translator, because that's the only thing I knew about.

I want to open up the world to students coming along, who say, "Why should I study French?" or "Why should I study Spanish?" We want to have two language lecture series, one is sort of a general one, and then I want to have 'Language and Your Career, where we'd bring in doctors, nurses, teachers, and architects, who'd talk about the use of language in their work. It's a huge project, so we need more volunteers, and we really need more money in the next year.

**LR:** Thank you for talking with us today.

Readers can contact the **National Museum of Language** through their website <http://languagemuseum.org/> or **National Museum of Language Administrative Offices Executive Building Suite 202 7100 Baltimore Avenue College Park, MD 20740**

## Promoting Foreign Language Development in the Art Classroom

By Cynthia Weill & Dr. K.B. Basseches

At Loudoun County Virginia's professional development days for its art teachers in August, Art Educator, Dr. K. B. Basseches and Foreign Language Consultant, Cynthia Weill demonstrated how to incorporate foreign language skill development into art and craft making activities.

Over a period of two days the presenters offered three workshops. The first presentation focused on wood carving and ceramics making in Oaxaca, Mexico. A second gave participants an in-depth review of textile arts from around the world such as Chilean *harpilleras*, Panamanian *molas*, story cloth and embroidery. In the first two sessions the presenters focused on the development of and intergenerational practices involved in making each of the crafts. A third presentation on Hurricane Katrina introduced participants to an art show arranged by Basseches entitled "...and the levee broke: meditations on the power of water" in which children and artist made art representing the theme of "the power of water."

With each session, the instructors modeled ways for the participants to reproduce variations of the art forms introduced such as ceramic sculpture and *molas*. For the former, the presenters described the methods artisans in Mexico use to create their ceramic work. Basseches emphasized the difference between making the art (as the Mexican originators do when they create their art) and making art "in the style of..." the Mexican artists (which is what students in American schools would do after seeing the Mexican work). Participants were also introduced to the skill of making Polaroid transfers to focus on the skill of "overlapping." Polaroid transfers were introduced as a contemporary interpretation of the *mola* tradition to produce the impression of shallow depth. Then art teachers were shown how they could work across disciplines with a foreign language teacher to improve skill areas in listening, speaking, reading and writing as well as vocabulary development.

An example of this combination of fine arts, content, and foreign language revolved around a unit on the Aguilar sisters of Oaxaca, Mexico. The sisters: Guillermina, Josefina, Irene and Concepción are internationally known ceramists working in a figurative style. As children, the girls were taught by their mother to make useful household objects of clay to sell in the local market to help supplement the family income. As they grew more skilled, each sister began working in a more figurative style. Now their work reflects the world around them as in the image of women at the local market. However, eldest sister Guillermina's work has become increasingly autobiographical as she represents herself in clay at various stages of her life.

Weill, who did much of her thesis research on Oaxacan artisans, presented the group with slides of Guillermina Aguilar's working process. Participants saw each stage of Guillermina's creative process from mixing clay, to modeling a figure, firing the object in a kiln, then painting the final work. Participants understood how Guillermina depends on all members of her family including her grandchildren to help her with this highly labor-intensive process.

After gaining an understanding of how Guillermina and her sisters made their work and the sources of their inspiration, participants combined art making and development of foreign language skills. For the first activity key items related to Guillermina's ceramic making were placed in a box. Then participants were asked to pull something from the box without looking. The instructor asked, "What is it?" / "¿Qué es?" Participants were then given the name for the object in Spanish such as clay, "*barro*" and ceramic figure, "*figura de cerámica*."

These words were carefully chosen to develop the learner's knowledge of ceramic making and to develop vocabulary for the following reading activity. The presenters read a translated and simplified version of the children's book, *Josefina* by Jeanette Winter. Josefina is the second eldest Aguilar sister. The book is especially useful because it documents the process of clay figure development through the pictures. Between the pictures and the new vocabulary the participants were able to follow the text of the book as it was read in Spanish. To reinforce understanding of the text the participants were asked to sequence pictures of the book that had been photocopied without the text. After they sequenced the work, the participants were given the text to place with the pictures. Knowledge of the key vocabulary taught in the beginning helped the participants to complete this task. For a final reading activity, the participants were given the text without the pictures and asked to draw illustrations for the written description.

As a culminating foreign language activity, participants were taught vocabulary for parts of the body: head, "*cabeza*," body, "*cuerpo*" as well as the commands for "make" and "put." Using Total Physical Response techniques (TPR) the instructors called off commands: make a head, "*hagan una cabeza*;" make a body, "*hagan un cuerpo*;" put the head on the body, "*pongan la cabeza con el cuerpo*." By the time the instructors were finished with the commands, the predominately monolingual art teachers had completed a clay figure.

The second part of the session was devoted to studio art making activities in which teachers could apply their knowledge of the ceramic tradition to make their own sculptures reflective of their own personal traits and symbols. One of the points made during the lecture on Guillermina Aguilar was how she evolved from making utilitarian objects to figurative/autobiographical pieces.



**Copy of an apaxtle or type of bowl  
made by Guillermina as a child**

In her twenties, Guillermina began experimenting with figurative work. She made the piece below in her late twenties. She felt that the piece was a statement on her life at the time.



**Figure of a young woman holding an apaxtle.**

Now that Guillermina is a grandmother she continues her autobiographical work. This piece of an old woman holding a young woman who is in turn holding a bowl is a commentary on her evolution as an artist.



**Figure of an old woman holding a ceramic sculpture of a young woman with a bowl.**

In order to prepare for the related ceramic making activity, participants were asked to make sketches from their own lives. After developing approximately six thumbnail sketches learners were given clay and asked to create an autobiographical statement. The teacher's artistic response was varied. Pieces included a triad of female figures representing the artist's role as wife, mother and teacher. Another teacher depicted himself as a fisherman and a painter.

Feedback on the introduction of foreign language into the art education classroom was very positive. Comments included, "I would have learned a foreign language if it had been taught to me in an art context;" and "I always thought there were natural connections between art and language development. It's just that no one ever showed me how to do it before."

K.B. Basseches is a professor at Virginia Commonwealth University. She is past president of the West Virginia Art Education Associations and was named West Virginia's Art Educator of the Year in 2002 and the West Virginia Art Education Association Higher Education Art Educator of the Year in 2000.

Cindy Weill was a Spanish teacher in the Glastonbury Public Schools in CT. She is trained as an art historian and studies the process of folk artisans around the world.

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## **Involving Parents in Their Children's Foreign Language Learning**

*Jennifer Kevorkian*

Research indicates that parental involvement in children's education positively impacts on children's learning. The National Standards for Foreign Language Learning call for progress toward extending learning into the community. Foreign language teachers can create and foster links between the school, home, and community by involving parents. This can benefit students by giving their academic learning relevance in terms of their home environments and community. While many school programs exist to inform parents of school procedures and activities, parental involvement as outlined in this article builds upon parents' knowledge and experiences and on their roles as community members. These enrich, enhance, and extend students' academic learning. This article suggests ways to establish links to home and community and identifies two areas of activities which support these links. (Note: the word parent is used in this article to describe any adult caretaker of a child.)

After deciding the basic structure of parental involvement, the teacher lays the groundwork for its establishment by sending home letters, by

holding workshops and meetings for parents, and/or by holding a discussion in class with children, informing and involving them in the project. Teachers may wish to emphasize to parents that they do not need to be familiar with the language their child is studying and that parents can participate in a number of ways, many of which are low or no cost.

Parents play an important role in making links between school and home. For example, children's interviews of parents can encourage parents and students to explore language and culture within their own homes. Students and teacher can work together to design oral interviews exploring parents' experiences with language learning and other cultures, including those being studied in the class. Sample starter questions are: Have you ever visited a country where people speak French? Why were you there? Did you ever study another language? Tell me about it. Did any of our ancestors come from a place where people spoke a language different than English? The data from these interviews can be used in class in a variety of activities, including reporting to the class orally, writing up the results of the interview, and creating visuals.

Parents can also play a valuable role in helping their children explore and become involved in their community's linguistic and cultural worlds. Parents and students can seek out community resources which are related to the language and culture being studied. These resources include radio stations or programs, newspapers, television shows, library holdings. They also include restaurants, movies, and food stores. Many communities have local festivals to celebrate the heritage of community members. There may also be cultural events which involve the language and culture. If attendance at such events or patronizing such establishments is not possible, simply documenting them provides evidence of their presence in the community, providing a relevance to and enhancing in-school learning. One elementary school Spanish teacher involved her students' parents by setting up a project in which students and parents together photographed stores, restaurants, and other establishments which were part of the Spanish-speaking community. This linked learning in the school, home, and community in a concrete manner.

Learning experiences shared between children and their parents and brought into the classroom provide a rich body of knowledge which can be further built upon. Parental involvement boosts student academic success by providing relevance to the home and establishing connections in the community.

Jennifer Delett and Barbara Rado Mousseau provided many ideas for this article.

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## Parents, Teacher, and a Community Help Make 5 de Mayo a Memorable Spanish-Speaking Event

By Jill Robbins and Carol Nezzo (Lakelands Park Middle School, Gaithersburg, MD) - May 2006

This month we celebrate the Hispanic-American holiday, Cinco de Mayo. According to [MEXonline.com](#), "The holiday of Cinco De Mayo, The 5th Of May, commemorates the victory of the Mexican militia over the French army at The Battle Of Puebla in 1862. It is primarily a regional holiday celebrated in the Mexican state capital city of Puebla and throughout the state of Puebla, with some recognition in other parts of the Mexico, and especially in U.S. cities with a significant Mexican population. It is not, as many people think, Mexico's Independence Day, which is actually September 16."

My ears perked up when I heard about a nearby school that is involving students of Spanish in service learning and culture. Carol Nezzo's class at [Lakelands Park Middle School](#) in Gaithersburg, Maryland visited a senior apartment complex to put on a program about Cinco De Mayo. They set up stations to work on crafts, history picture book making, and games with the residents, shared their experiences with cooking foods from Spanish-speaking countries. They made [Ojos de Dios](#) (God's Eyes; a woven decoration made with sticks and yarn) and [Papel Picado](#), intricate designs made by folding and cutting paper. How did one part-time teacher manage to organize this opportunity for her Spanish students? She called upon the resources available to her through her community, the city of Gaithersburg, and among the parents of her students.

### How the City and School Collaboration Began

Maureen Herndon, who is Program Manager for Human Services in the City of Gaithersburg, is excited about the Cinco de Mayo event. Forest Oak Towers is a housing complex for seniors and disabled individuals. Speaking last week, Herndon said, "The counselor there, Connelly Stewart, is wonderful and she has been working with many residents on a wide range of issues and has also pointed out the need for fun and group activities. At the same time, Carol Nezzo called and asked us if we knew of any volunteer opportunity for her Spanish classes. We matched the two groups and are very excited to be part of this intergenerational, intercultural and sure to be fun event! Over 25 residents are presently signed up to attend."



### Cooking in Spanish



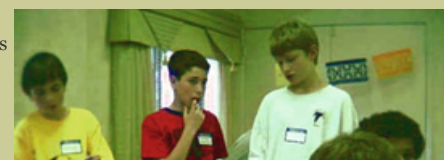
To begin learning about Mexican culture, the class made tortillas by hand and with tortilla presses. The students found that they like the press method better than making tortillas by hand. They also used the Mexican chocolate rounds that contain cinnamon to make Mexican hot chocolate. After "baking" the tortillas on top of the stove, students added cheese (Monterrey Jack) to make quesadillas, which were heated on cookie sheets in the ovens. (The school has a special teaching kitchen with six ovens.) There was some instruction in cooking safety, of course. Parent volunteer Donna Von Wald explained "It was messy, but fun!" It was a great way to get the students more deeply involved with Spanish class.

The students next had to research and choose a recipe that would be common in a Spanish-speaking country. See the [worksheet Nezzo created](#) to explain the Comida unit. To help them find recipes, Nezzo brought in books from the library. A series she found helpful was Lerner Publishing's [Easy Menu Ethnic Cookbooks](#) with titles like, "Cooking the Cuban Way," "Cooking the Mexican Way" and [Cocina de la Familia](#) by Marilyn Tausend. Nezzo liked these books because "They did not look childish at all and they explained the recipes very clearly in

large print." Student translated into Spanish, and made a poster with an introduction to the food and a drawing or photo; a list and a picture of the ingredients; and a map of the country. To download the worksheet directing how to make the poster, [click here](#). Each student made the food at home, then several parent volunteers came into class to help heat up the dishes and serve them pot-luck style.

### Preparation for the Fiesta

Before the Cinco de Mayo event, Nezzo had students choose a station to prepare. She explains, "The more time to brainstorm with students ahead of time, the more the students come up with their talents that they want to share. They could choose a craft station such as ojos de dios, flores, papel picado - or they could choose the history station and do book making and enter information and pictures connected with Cinco de Mayo." To practice a dialogue about their craft or the content of their station, Nezzo had students use post-it notes to construct sentences and arrange them into a dialogue. The stations they could



choose from included quesadilla making, and they took along their food posters to hang near the food preparation." Sangria was served at the fiesta as a drink, at a parent's suggestion. "Sangria originated in Spain and is now in many Latin American Countries. There are lots of recipes without alcohol. If there had been more space and time at the fiesta, it would have been possible to have a lesson based on the different fruit vocabulary and verbs in the recipe. Next year I may make a list of the foods and drinks for the students to choose from – or at least make sure that the April posters include one focused on Sangria. The students did very well choosing their own recipes. There were some duplicates, but that was ok. A substitute teacher volunteered (without pay) and the tech person helped. So we have a wonderful crew!"



### Cinco de Mayo Celebration

On the day before the celebration, parent volunteers noticed only ten students had returned their permission slips. So they called and reminded parents to send in the forms, and when they came to school on Friday, 30 students had the signed forms. This is yet another way that parents can help to make such an event more successful. At Forest Oak Towers, 35 – 40 seniors and their assistants enjoyed traveling from one station to another learning about Mexican history, crafts, and food. The stations were:

- **Ojos de Dios** (God's Eyes): The students used popsicle sticks for the cross pieces on this craft which comes from the Huichol Indians in Mexico. Volunteer Donna Von Wald recommends using variegated yarn so you don't have to switch colors and still end up with a beautiful multicolored hanging.
- **Flores**: students showed how to make beautiful paper flowers



- **Papel Picado**: students showed how to fold and cut colored paper to make lacy decorations to hang from ceilings or walls.
- **Making quesadillas**: students assembled tortillas, cheese, and spinach to toast in the oven (much of the food was provided by the City of Gaithersburg).
- **Playing games**: students brought checkers and cribbage to play with the residents.



- **History Picture Books**: students and guests colored designs that represented aspects of Cinco de Mayo. This activity was popular - and a good way to engage people in conversations about Cinco de Mayo.
- **Non-Alcoholic Sangria**: students cut up fruit and mixed juices for this punch drink.
- **Mexican Wedding cookies**: students showed their posters of how to make the cookies and their history and provided samples.



Guests arrived and the party proceeded with a lot of activity. A few students had the food station and they helped guests to carry food to seats. Students did not eat until all guests had their food - which means the students did not eat much. (Students took and ate bag lunches at the site, because the parents and teacher were not sure about available food for the students. It turned out to be essential that they had eaten their bag lunch, because more senior guests arrived than had signed up so there was not a lot of party food for the students.) There was a welcome in Spanish from a senior resident. A community person had come with a father who acted as the Master of Ceremonies, and she translated to English. A student volunteered the true meaning of Cinco de Mayo. Most of what went on was student initiated. The celebration was greatly appreciated by the residents; Von Wald said many of them thanked the parents and students for bringing the celebration to them. The residents requested that the papel picado be left hanging, because it brightened up the room. The residents turned out to be multi-ethnic, not just Hispanic.

Communication went on in English, Spanish and through demonstration. When the event was over, students had an hour to clean up and to reflect on the service they performed, how it was helpful to the community, and what they learned about themselves. They will receive service learning hours. To follow up on the event, Nezzo's students will reflect and discuss how Spanish gets one into interesting places with interesting people. They will write for short periods in their Learning Logs.

### Getting parents and the community involved

I was impressed with how much Nezzo is able to accomplish with her middle school Spanish class, so I asked how she gets parents to help out. She told about her process: "Beginning in August, I talked with all parents by phone and at Back to School night. I keep a data sheet for each family. Over Christmas break I reviewed the sheets to recall the families who were interested in volunteering. I matched them up with my notebook that I keep on possible field trips and projects. At the same time, I called the places where we might have trips in order to get tentative dates. I keep working with two types of data: 1) Family data sheets where I record what parents/guardians say and 2) My notebook that has divisions for all of the possible projects and trips that we might do - and the information that I gradually collect about these. Eventually, because of wonderful kids and parents, ideas and plans from everyone come together." Nezzo continues: "I am a part time teacher so that I can have time for this. There are parents who are very gracious with their time. Many do have their own jobs. One or two do not. Some have flexible schedules. Some knew each other from the previous grade school. So there are many things that come together here. We have a dedicated and experienced volunteer coordinator for our school. I hope that this is not a "once in a lifetime" kind of year - but these experiences for the students do depend on a lot of people working together - and the e-mail."



Parent Von Wald commented that many parents are happy to come in to help in the classroom, because such opportunities are rarer when their child is in middle school. Nezzo welcomes parents at any time; a special chair is set aside in her classroom for parents who are visiting. She has arranged other field trips, such as to the University of Maryland's Language House, to demonstrate to students where language study may take them. Students in Lakelands Park Middle School Spanish classes are the beneficiaries of an imaginative teacher and generous parents who created a memorable educational experience for all involved.

(Photos by Leslie Guerra)

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## Parent and School Support Make an Outstanding FLES

### Program Possible in Fairfax County, VA by Jill Robbins *Sept. 2006*

Schools across the country are looking for ways to introduce foreign language instruction to students at younger ages. One county whose world language offerings really stand out from the crowd is Fairfax County, Virginia. <http://www.fcps.edu/DIS/OHSICS/forlang/> Eleven languages are offered: American Sign Language, Arabic, Japanese, Chinese, Korean, French, Latin, German, Russian, Italian, and Spanish. Fairfax has had immersion schools since 1989 and has 13 immersion programs currently. FLES (Foreign Language in Elementary Schools) programs were started in the late 90s. Paula Patrick, Foreign Language Coordinator, tells us that the county has proposed introduction of foreign language in 137 elementary schools. A task force advised starting with 24 schools to be phased in gradually, utilizing 12 part-time teachers. These teachers will move up from 1st grade to 2nd grade in the next year, and so on. The county will need approximately 189 teachers for the program when all is done. Fairfax County is fortunate to be near the nation's capital, where there are many potential language teachers available. A program is being developed with local universities to support better preparation for teachers of elementary foreign language. Virginia gives a Pre-K through 12 teaching license based on course work completed in the language, or the candidate can take the Oral Proficiency Interview to demonstrate ability in the language to get an endorsement.

Parent support is necessary to successfully initiating a FLES. The demand for FLES programs comes increasingly from parents; "We read almost weekly an article on the importance of foreign languages so we are getting increased demand from parents for FLES," Patrick states. There also needs to be support from classroom teachers and from the administration. Patrick explained that prior to beginning a FLES program at a school, district foreign language staff should talk with the principal and faculty, as well as parents. She focuses on the findings of brain research at such school meetings with parents and staff, showing how learning a foreign language at an early age supports children's learning in other areas. "We have support as long as we give parents the information they need up front," Patrick reflects, "And we need to let the parents know that foreign language instruction has changed since their own experiences with it." Current communicative, interactive approaches promise that their children will not have the same kinds of ineffective or even negative associations with language learning that some parents may have had. Some parents may even look at language as interference; time taken away from the core subjects on which their children will be tested. Parents should be given the chance to give input on the proposed FLES program and ask questions so that problems can be avoided later.

Once a FLES program has begun at a school, parents need continued information on what to expect from their children. Parents will need to encourage students to practice, but there are no grades for FLES, so there is no real pressure. Patrick emphasized that "parents need to understand that the first few years kids need a lot of input - they shouldn't be asked to perform early in their study."

What is truly rewarding is the excitement that develops when a group of parents in a school offering FLES become involved with their children's learning by arranging and participating in field trips and special events, "really getting on board with the language." In fact, Patrick says, "Parents can be your best friends" in making a FLES program successful.

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## Communicating with parents and involving them in their child's foreign language learning

by Jill Robbins, with Carol Nezzo, Karen Sanchez, Deb Brun, and Emily Serafa Manschot - *Sept. 2006*

Last month our newsletter asked teachers how they involve parents. From the sparse response, it seems that there is little parent involvement in foreign language classes. Our May issue featured a story about a Spanish class who benefited from parents who helped with arranging a cooking activity and a field trip [See the article](#). The teacher, Carol Nezzo, used this technique for contacting parents: she asked students to fill out a form with their home number and some information about their pets. This provides her with something to talk about with both parents and students. She calls parents and arranges with them for a part of the school year when they will be able to come in and help or help with a field trip.

Parent volunteers were also solicited by the school and at the beginning of the school year, Nezzo was able to get them to help set up her room, which she shared with a Chinese teacher. Wall space was limited, so she explored the use of a portable 'word wall' Using laminated paper, she had parents email her images that she could use to illustrate words, such as a mother welcoming a child home next to the verb "vivir."

Another teacher, Karen, Sanchez, uses a 'moodle' website\* set up by her school to communicate with both parents and students. She describes the capabilities of the moodle as "fantastic." [You can view her moodle if you login as a guest](#). One of the features of her moodle is a pop quiz for parents, which she drew from a posting by [Dave Shelley on FLTeach](#). We've updated it with new statistics; you view the document [here](#).

\*([Moodle](#) is a free, Open Source software package designed using sound pedagogical principles, to help educators create effective online

learning communities)

Karen has used a website for more than six years to communicate with parents. She says her school used Blackboard for a while, but it became too expensive to maintain. Her school had an online course that teachers could take for free on how to use a moodle, and when she tested it with parents they liked it better because "it's easier to maneuver. It's easier to read and the kids like the calendar for planning purposes. There are lots of different types of activities/resources that can be implemented; I just plug in the info and it's set up. I can also make a webpage of sorts in it, including pictures etc. So far it seems to be the best of both worlds, the ease of BB with the features of a website. I also like the fact that I can upload all of my info now, and with one click either choose to show or "hide" the info from the students." Karen created a page on how parents can help their students. You can follow the [link to her moodle](#). Karen's website also has information about a Spanish singer who produces karaoke online for Spanish students, and gives live concerts. "I hosted my 1st Justo concert in 2000 (<http://www.justolamas.com/>). I've hosted him every year since". Justo and his wife Eva told me that I was the first teacher to host him in NYS, and then I continue to help him by coordinating other concerts and creating a NY Tour week. I also brought him to the NYS AFLT annual meeting a number of years ago. My students LOVE him. We have a Justo club here, and they design a different tee shirt every year and wear glo necklaces to the show... I even changed schools in 2002 and continued to host him at my new district. I have a very small school, so I have to rent out a theatre in a neighboring city. You can see our Justo page here: <http://www.geocities.com/salachic/justo.html> Our next concert is in March. :-) You should definitely see him if you get the chance."

Emily Serafa Manschot has parents "participate in Student Led Conferences. The student prepares a portfolio with all of their tests, quizzes, projects, sample activities, etc. -- and presents them to his/her parents at parent teacher conferences. The students come to my room for their conference. I act as hostess for the evening, but the student's work says so much more than just "what's the grade?" The conferences take place in October and I have them do a take home conference in December/early January."

Deb Bruhn, who teaches middle school French and Spanish, manages "an e-mail list for all parents of Spanish students. I invite them to send me their e-mail addresses in my first-day hand-out and I put the list together from those addresses. I send parents information about tests, invite them to view my web site (which includes the homework assignments), invite them to Open House and inform them when I will be available for Parent Conferences, just to name a few things. About 3/4 of my parents participate; I assume that the others don't have Internet access or perhaps just don't want to give out their addresses. Response from the parents has been very positive. I do send home information about Parent-Teacher Conferences by paper for the students whose parents are not part of the e-mail list, but that's about it. They just miss out on announcements for tests, quizzes, or review classes. The students ALWAYS have this information, they are not suffering if their parents don't belong to the list. I have never used the e-mail list to request help from parents for a project or to chaperone a field trip. I don't think that whether the parents received an e-mail invitation or not has any effect on their attendance at Open House, but I do know that they like it. I usually get a good turn-out on Back to School Night, but that is because my kids are high achievers and high achievers' parents are usually the ones who attend all these affairs at school! The e-mail list is DEFINITELY working, though; I had one student who came in to me this week who said we needed to get rid of the e-mail. His dad got the announcement about our first quiz and made him make vocabulary flashcards!

My Web site URL is: <http://users.adelphia.net/~paul.bruhn> I created it myself; trust me, you'll be able to tell!

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## Preparing powerful presentations

by *Dorecas Francisco*

The presentational mode is one of the three components of the Communication Standard and as such requires that students do just what they seem to fear most: speak in front of the class for an extended period of time about some topic. The kicker is that, it must be in a foreign language!

There's probably nothing that strikes more terror into the well-being of students, and even some adults, than the prospect of having to give a presentation - in front of a group of people - out loud - unassisted - that lasts more than 5 minutes - about something they are supposed to know about. Gasp!

Yet, public speaking is difficult for many of the students in your classroom. Add speaking in a foreign language, and you are guaranteed to have a class full of anxious, scared students. However, this does not have to be the case! No matter the field of study or career, being able to articulate your thoughts clearly is an invaluable asset. Just imagine how much better it would be for students to successfully present in more than one language! What techniques and tips can language students use to ease the fear of public speaking in the target language? From the very first day and every day after that, help your students gain new confidence and skills by teaching your students some of the ideas discussed below.

### Building Confidence and Skills for Public Speaking: The Important Pieces

#### 1. Prepare, prepare, prepare:

Preparation is often times underrated. In fact, preparation arguably is one of the most important components to successful communication through public speaking. When preparing, what should your students be thinking about?

- **Who:** Who is the audience? What are their interests? Needs?
- **What:** What is it that you want them to know? How will you know if you have successfully communicated with them?
- **How:** How can you best transmit your message? What are the nonverbal cues that may add or detract from your presentation? Language is extremely important. Does your presentation have a beginning, middle, and end? Will visual aids help?
- **When:** Timing is also important to your presentation. How is the pace of your speaking? Remember, you do not want to be too fast or too slow. How much time is available?
- **Why:** As the speaker, you should be interested in what you are sharing and you want your audience to be too! In a sense, you must convince them that what you have to say is worth their attention. Remember, you want your audience to not only hear you, but to listen to you, and to remember what you have said.

#### 2. Remember to use eye contact:

You should be able to make a connection with your audience.

#### 3. Consider Handouts:

Handouts are an excellent way to help your audience follow the presentation. Be careful, however, too many handouts can be a distraction, so choose carefully. Handouts should work to guide the listener, or to amplify or demonstrate a point. They should not be a script of your speech.

#### 4. Pay attention to your voice:

You want your audience to be able to hear what you are saying. Also vary your tone and the speed during your presentation. You want them to feel your energy as well as draw in close.

## 5. Use visual aids:

People like to look at things. Flip charts, overhead projectors, and short video can all be used to make the presentation more memorable. Too much detail or overly technical information might be too confusing and detract from what you are actually trying to say. Above all as teachers, it is necessary to model what we want our students to learn. Do a special presentation in class and explain to your students the technical aspects of your presentation.

### Preparing for the final Presentation

Chances are your students may be overwhelmed by all of the new information on presenting. As the old saying goes, "practice makes perfect." To give your students an opportunity to practice developing a presentation, let them work on their class presentation in groups of two. While working in groups, allow each student to prepare and practice their presentations. Partners can aid each other with the actual content of the presentation, the development of the presentation, or the actual presenting. The group work is designed for peer evaluation and support. Also provide them with a checklist that they will use to evaluate their own presentations.

Once students have an idea of what will be expected of them, have them prepare a 5-minute presentation on their own, one that incorporates the use of notes, visuals, props, and good voice management and body language. A three-step process expanding on the presentation developed during group work will demonstrate to students the value of the various elements and will underscore the importance of practice.

### Planning Verbal Content

The first step is to create an outline, and transfer it to note cards they will consult during their speech. Demonstrating good and bad techniques of voice management and body language will help the students visualize themselves in front of a group. Work with students on how to handle the note cards, how to consult notes without reading, and how to maintain eye contact with the audience, while directing their voice to the audience. This step provides them with the confidence to move forward and include visuals that will help to illustrate and clarify their presentation.

The second step is to prepare a visual, which can take the form of a poster, a set of transparencies, a PowerPoint, or even a short video clip. Work with students on where to place the visual in relationship to where they will be standing, so they do not impede the audience's view. They need to practice pointing to the poster while maintaining eye and voice contact with their audience. Students find that this step takes them away from the relative comfort of a podium and their note cards, so they must know what they are saying, and how they are saying it.

### Practicing with Props

The third step in the presentation might be to add a model into the mix, requiring the students to show or demonstrate the use of an item that is integral to the presentation. Work with students on how to hold this item without obscuring it in their hands. The model may be shown at any time during the speech to increase visual interest.

The result of this three-step process is to provide students with enough contact with their speech, its various parts, and with actual practice, so that the final speech is a success: it covers the material well, it fits into the allotted time space, it includes the audience in the presentation, and it provides a true sense of accomplishment for the student presenter. Final Thoughts. Starting the very first day of class and continuing every day throughout their course of study, each successive speaking experience our students have will develop confidence and comfort, ultimately creating an individual who is self-assured when presenting information to a group. Regardless of their choice of profession, most of our students at one time or another will be in a position where they will have to speak to a gathering. It might be at work, at church, at a club meeting, or as a Scout leader. Whatever the purpose of public speaking, being able to do so comfortably in more than one language is a real asset we teachers can provide for our students.

Above all, help your students to enjoy the experience. Public speaking is an opportunity to share with others. Remind your students they have a voice and others can benefit from their input. Help your students to realize that public speaking does not have to be a chore, but can be a fun, educational, and informative experience.

These are some suggestions for checklist/guidelines to give students while preparing their presentation.

Question	Yes	No
Did I speak clearly?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Was the audience able to hear me?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did I speak at the right pace?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did I make eye contact with the audience?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did I connect with the audience?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did I Use visual aids? Hand-outs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### What do you think the strengths of your presentation are?

### What do you think the weaknesses of your presentation are?

If possible, videotape students while they are presenting. Seeing themselves on video will allow them to have a better sense of what their presenting styles and strengths are.

This is a possible guide that can be used to help students prepare for their presentations.

1. Stand erect, feet planted squarely on the floor.
2. Stand in one place.
3. Keep gestures calm and contained.
4. Speak loudly enough to be heard over entire space.
5. Speak at a speed appropriate for the audience and purpose.
6. Speak with appropriate phrasing.
7. Speak with appropriate intonation.
8. Enunciate words clearly.
9. Pronounce words correctly.
10. Use correct grammar.
11. Use a vocabulary equal to the audience.
12. Provide an appropriate list of vocabulary.
13. Maintain good eye contact with the audience.
14. Move cards in an unobtrusive manner.
15. Use 4" x 6" or 5" x 8" note cards.
16. Place poster where all can easily see it.

17. Avoid standing between poster and the audience.
18. Use a pointer/pointing stick/laser.
19. Hold pointer steady at area to be identified.
20. Maintain proper eye contact with audience.
21. Directs voice to audience.
22. Poster supports speech.
23. Poster layout is uncluttered.
24. Poster layout is visually appealing.
25. Poster contains correct grammar.
26. Poster contains correct spelling.
27. Poster vocabulary is appropriate.
28. Introduce item to be shown.
29. Hold item to be shown so that hands do not cover/block view.
30. Item is large enough for audience to see.
31. Item supports/adds to the speech.
32. Continue speaking while showing/demonstrating.
33. Show item to entire audience.
34. Length of speech.

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## Your French Classroom is on Fire! What do you Grab on your Way Out?

By Mary Ann Freeman **June 2006**

Losing everything in a fire has always been one of my worst nightmares. When we heard the alarm during lunch on March 3 we were surprised and a little confused. Why were we having a fire drill during lunch? I was supervising freshmen and sophomores in the small computer lab in the library. We looked at each other and I said, "Well, I guess we'd better get out." When some students in the library hesitated at the door I ordered them to leave by the nearest exit. In the lunchroom, some of the juniors and seniors were grabbing doughnuts and fish sticks to finish outside. I never had my lunch, which is still sitting in my room.



**Kerr Roof: where the fire started, looking up through the non-existent roof**

We gathered on the school lawn as we had practiced in the fire drills, still unsure of what exactly was going on. Then we saw the little wisps of white smoke coming from the room above mine. We watched for the next fifteen minutes as the smoke gently crept across the rooftop, seeping so delicately from the cracks. I kept thinking that it would be alright. It was only a little smoke. The fire department would be able to handle this. Teachers ordered the students to get into their respective classes and line up alphabetically so we could check roll. The smoke was now seeping from the rooftop at the other end of the building.

Soon after the fire trucks arrived we were instructed to go to the ball field, which was stage B of our evacuation drill. On the way, I stopped to look back at the building and saw the great grey-black smoke roiling up and then the huge ball of orange-red flame. It was over. Nothing would save our building now. The smoke became blacker, the flames shot higher. Decisions had to be made on how to proceed.

Students who had driven were allowed to leave first, with parental permission. The problem was that only one of the secretaries had her cell phone. The problem was solved when it was discovered that about thirty students had broken the cell phone rule and had their phones with them. I borrowed one to contact my husband who was taking a day off work. I had driven his car to work and the keys were inside the school. The remaining students were divided into classes and bussed to the community building. From there we still had a view of our burning building. One of my students asked me, "Mrs. Freeman, does this mean we won't have any more fun French activities?"

We mingled, stunned, watching the fire consume the top floor. Teachers continued to borrow cell phones to contact students' parents. My husband arrived with our neighbor. Shortly after that, our principal called those remaining together to say that school would be in session again next week. He said teachers with transportation could leave. My husband drove me home.

My husband assured me that everything would turn out alright; the school would be rebuilt. But all I could think of was the loss of twenty years' work and all the materials I had created and collected. In addition, my handbag, my cell phone, my iPod, and the sole key to my Beetle were also inside. I thought they would be safe since they were locked in a metal cabinet, but when would I be able to recover them?

That afternoon I contacted my colleagues on [FLTeach](#). For the past six years, FLTeach has been a great resource, discussion board and support group for me. Soon I received emails offering condolences and materials. Over the next three weeks I received teacher's editions, ancillary materials, worksheets, workbooks and textbooks from FLTeach list members. One list member who had experienced a school fire told me that her school had had tee-shirts made that stated "I survived the fire of 1987." Our principal liked the idea and adapted it to "We will survive!"



**Standing inside my room, looking out at the hallway and the south stairs**

Over the weekend, the community came together. Students' belongings were salvaged from their lockers and bagged. Some of the teachers' personal belongings were also recovered from their rooms. Documents from the office were aired out and dried in the middle school gym. Water damaged computers were removed from the library and classrooms. I was able to recover my jump drive which I had left in my classroom computer. The firemen also recovered my book bag, a few cassettes and CD's and a drawer from my old desk. My handbag, car keys, iPod and cell phone weren't recovered until Tuesday. Volunteers helped set up classrooms in the Methodist Church and the junior high building. A computer lab was set up in the Church.

School began again on the Wednesday following the fire. As the students returned that morning, the disco hit "I will survive" was playing and they were each given a tee-shirt. Our students were sober but optimistic. Our principal reassured them that the school would survive and the seniors would graduate at the high school gymnasium on May 21.



**Computer Lab:**

In the following weeks local businesses, other area schools and various organizations held fund-raisers and donated money and supplies to help us get through the rest of the year. We struggled at first and wondered how we were ever going to make it through the rest of the year. At least half of my textbooks had either been burned or water-damaged. I was able to find replacement copies of the French textbooks for \$16.00 each so these were replaced quickly. Fortunately, I save and transfer documents created at school on my home computer so none of that work was lost. We operated on a shortened schedule with dismissal at 12:35 and lunch until 1:00. Classes were 55 minutes long and we stayed on the block schedule of A/B days. Since the students had no lockers and as we were short of textbooks, I insisted my students be more focused and complete all their work in class so the textbooks did not leave the room.

Over the next two weeks I would start to plan a lesson, then realize, "Oh wait, I don't have that anymore."

On March 20, we were told that we could go into the building, with a custodian, and remove anything that was irreplaceable. We were not to remove anything that was covered by insurance. On March 21, it snowed sufficiently to cancel school. I returned to the building on March 22 with my camera. The top floor was totally incinerated. The middle floor showed some water damage but didn't look too bad except for the room next door to mine where the room above had collapsed into it. The basement was totally ruined by the 62,000 gallons of water that had been used to contain the blaze. I recovered my professional development file and left, thinking I could return the following day with a box to recover more irreplaceable items. The next day we were told that nothing more could be removed from the building because of asbestos contamination. It was frustrating to have seen undamaged items that now could not be removed. And it was time to make an inventory.

Years ago we were required to turn in an inventory at the end of every year. I found an old inventory from 1999 at home with a post-it note saying: "Put on computer." It was a start. Over the next few weeks I kept remembering more things that I had lost. By the time I completed the inventory in April I realized how much old stuff I had had. My students used to ask, "Mrs. Freeman, how old is this video?" Several were older than the students, I must admit. On the day of the fire, some were trying to reassure others by saying that "It's only stuff. You can replace stuff." I thought, "Yeah, but it's my stuff." It was two months after the event before I was finally able to "let go" of my stuff. I began to look upon the fire as a really drastic spring cleaning.



South stairs: Outside Kerr's room

By the last week in March we had settled into a new routine and adjusted to our new surroundings. Since we didn't have the same bell schedule as the junior high and the church had no bell system at all we had synchronized digital clocks. I downloaded [Cool Timer](#) from the Internet and loaded my own alarm. Soon the students were leaving class singing and dancing to Karl Zero's "Ça va, Ça va." My concentration and memory were gradually improving but I still couldn't concentrate long enough to enjoy a good book.

In addition to the material losses I also regretted not being able to take my students to the computer lab as frequently as before. They always looked forward to a break from the classroom and enjoyed the on-line activities on [my Quia site](#) (Quintessential Instructional Archive). When I first started using [Quia](#) in 1999, the activities were simple flashcards, matching, concentration and word search puzzles that students could play on-line. Since then the company has added a wider range of activities as well as quizzes. Subscribers can copy activities written by other Quia subscribers and modify them to suit their own needs. Last fall the company improved the quiz generator. Teachers can create questions in a bank and create quizzes on line by choosing questions from that bank. Even though I couldn't get to the computer lab, I could still use the questions I'd created and make new quizzes. I was able to make different copies of the same quiz to discourage cheating, print out the quizzes and photocopy them. I also used Quia to create my final exams.

When we returned from Easter break things seemed almost normal. However, I was beginning to feel a little isolated from the rest of my colleagues in my "penthouse." I began to miss the material things less and remember the old familiar building and its routines with nostalgia. I missed not talking to the math teacher between classes and greeting the science teacher when she arrived in the morning. I missed not seeing the students in the hallway.



Hurt room: looking up in the room where the ceiling collapsed; the sky looks grey here

Our principal felt that it was important for every event that had been scheduled before the fire to take place. Despite losing their projects in the fire, the science club students reconstructed their projects and continued to compete at science fairs. One student advanced to the International Fair and won a \$20,000 scholarship. The annual school spring picnic was held at the high school ball diamond. There were class competitions, including a fire trivia quiz. A group photograph was taken of the entire student body and staff, all wearing the tee-shirts with the school in the background. Another school held a fund raiser to help replace the prom decorations and the DJ refused payment for his services at the prom.

The gymnasium was packed to the rafters for graduation on May 21. The spectators gave us a standing ovation as we walked down the aisle to our reserved places to "Who Says You Can't Go Home?" by Jon Bon Jovi. We had done it. With the help of the community, the churches, businesses and many people in other communities, we had made it. But we owe most of our success to our principal with his optimism, determination, leadership and sense of humor.

Three days before our disaster, my third and fourth year French students attended a Mardi Gras Festival at a local college. Although they were a little shy and unsure of themselves, they had a great time. Next year the theme for the festival is "Heroes and Heroines." Perfect. We can dress as firemen. They can write and perform a skit about the fire and all the other heroes and heroines who helped us survive.

After the fire, I kept reliving the event and waking up in the middle of the night thinking about it. I mourned over my losses and kept remembering more things until eventually the importance of that material stuff faded away. It has been over three months since the fire. The old building is due for demolition in June. The modular classrooms which will be our home for the next two years have arrived. I am excited and looking forward to the challenges and changes ahead. On March 3, I watched a building that had been part of my life for twenty years be destroyed by fire. Now it's time to look ahead; it's time to move on.



**News Story:** The local TV stations were there and the following article was in the Peoria Journal Star : [http://www.pjstar.com/stories/052106/PHI\\_B9SIJR98.037.shtml](http://www.pjstar.com/stories/052106/PHI_B9SIJR98.037.shtml)

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## Students Using their Language in their Communities

by Sheila W. Cockey

What do a classroom; a doctor's office, a newsroom, a day care center, a visitor's information bureau, a hospital, a place of worship, an orphanage, and a retirement home all have in common?

At first glance, these very diverse environments appear to be completely different from one another. However, upon further examination, these sites become locations where high school students of foreign languages (FL) may put their skills to work in real-life situations.

The Five C's of the National Standards for Foreign Languages act as a guide for teachers as they make decisions about what to include in their curriculum and lesson plans. Communities, the fifth strand, includes two standards. "The first standard emphasizes applied learning, while the second focuses on personal enrichment." (64) The end result of the Communities strand involves putting the students in a situation where they interact with a community in the language they are learning.

This Communities strand is one that many teachers find to be the most difficult one to address successfully. They offer many reasons for this, including availability of local resources and the additional time required to set up a community experience and follow through on it. There are many communities where there are few, if any, opportunities to use a FL outside of the classroom just simply because there is a limited population of users of the FL in the area near the school. Often, the actual experience takes place after school hours, although much of the preparation can be done during class, if time and curriculum permit. In spite of these drawbacks, successful experiences gain high praise from

everybody involved: students, community members, teachers, and school personnel.

What are some of the things that can be devised to bring students out of the classroom, into the community, and into contact with native speakers in a natural setting? In the box below is a list of ideas, followed by a brief description of five of the more unique endeavors.

- Teaching aide for doctor's office staff
- Creating educational coloring books
- Translation of documents for local hospital
- Working at an orphanage
- Creating a regular newspaper page for children
- Helping out at a day care facility
- Attending religious services in the FL
- Teach an elementary school class
- Foreign film festival
- Reading to or playing games with a resident at an elder care center
- Introduce new arrivals to the services (grocery store, post office, bank) offered in the community

**1. The result of a casual comment, a multi-year collaboration between an upper level Spanish class and the Department of Education (DOE) at the local hospital resulted in a variety of useful products.** Among these products were: the Food Services menu for hospital patients, a coloring book for young children introducing them to the various people who work at the hospital, flyers with nutritional information for pregnant women, and application forms and information for Nurse's Aide positions. The hospital DOE provided the students with the original documents in English. These were supplemented by a vocabulary list created by the teacher in an attempt to standardize the vocabulary. Once the documents were converted to Spanish, they were sent to the hospital, where, before being implemented, they were reviewed by the legal department.

**Reactions to and comments about these projects include:**

- It makes me really proud to know that the Spanish-speaking patients at the hospital can read the food services menu in their own language. And this is because I worked on the Spanish-language menu! (A student)
- Coloring books are a cool, fun way to help children become familiar with the unknown. Translating the hospital professions coloring book for the hospital education department was a rewarding experience because I know that it will help young children feel a bit more comfortable when they have a hospital experience.(A student)
- So many of the employees at the hospital are Spanish-speaking and have limited English proficiency. The documents necessary for their employment and training need to be translated into their language. Working on the application form for Nurse Aid and the HIPPA privacy information were difficult and rewarding assignments. (A student)
- Good pre-natal health is so important, and since that is the area of medicine I wish to enter, it was an honor to work on two flyers that will be given to pregnant women. These flyers will help them eat properly so that the nutritional balance is there for the development of a healthy baby. (A student)
- Have really appreciated working with you and the students...we certainly received benefits as well!! (Hospital DOE Staff Member)
- The Food Services people are delighted with their new menu! (Hospital DOE Staff Member)

**2. Another multi-year collaboration arose out of a class discussion prompted by the reading of the monthly Spanish-language newspaper distributed free by the local daily newspaper.** Several students felt that the missing element in that newspaper was a children's page. They encouraged their teacher to contact the editor and to invite her to class so they could present their ideas for the addition of a children's page. Impressed with what the students had said and their plan to execute the project, she discussed the idea with her editors and it was approved. The students determined a theme for each page, researched information, created activities centered on the theme, learned to use publishing software, and met their deadlines. They created a logo and a cast of continuing characters, including a boy and girl, and a cartoon character. The students created all of the artwork, which was original to avoid copyright issues. The editor, a native speaker of Spanish, gave the final approval of the language. Unfortunately, this project was terminated when the newspaper editors discontinued publication of the monthly Spanish language edition.

**Reactions to and comments about this project included:**

- It's awesome to see my work out there for the public! (A student)
- Children need to become familiar with a newspaper, to learn about reading the newspaper for information, and to become thoughtful, discriminating readers. The local all-Spanish edition did not address these needs, so we did. We understand that the kids had fun with our pages and that was the point. (A student)
- My children really look forward to each new edition and enjoy the activities on the page. (A parent)
- Thank you and the class for doing such a fantastic job with [the children's page]. I love it! (The Editor)
- I think it is great what you are doing with the class.(A School Board Member)

**3. A teacher was asked to formulate a class for the staff of a doctor's office where the primary language for most of the patients was Spanish.** Students were enlisted to prepare vocabulary posters and to act as teacher's aides during the role-playing practice portion of each weekly class. This very successful endeavor lasted for 10 weeks and resulted in the office staff, nurses, and PA, as well as the physician, being able to communicate much more effectively with their patient clients. All of the "students" were very appreciative of the learning opportunity this provided and the increased care and understanding they were able to provide every week as the class progressed. This experience inspired one of the teacher's aide students to become a family practice physician in a locality where she could use her knowledge of Spanish.

**Reactions to and comments about this project included:**

- I wish you would package this so that I can carry it with me always! I feel so much more effective with the patients now that I can actually ask questions and sort of understand their answers. (A nurse)
- Seeing the students come to the realization of the importance of what they were doing was very special for me. This was the first time they had actually understood how Spanish could be used in important ways outside of the classroom – ways that were easily within reach of them. (The teacher)
- Wow! I didn't think I would be able to help out my teacher with the project beyond making a poster for them. Was I ever wrong! I learned to improvise based on my knowledge of the vocabulary and my own experiences in the doctor's office when I had the flu. And I could do it!!!! (A student)

**4. Sparked by the 3-time experience of one student and her father, a class trip during winter break evolved into a week at a small orphanage in Mexico.** While at the orphanage, the students spent the mornings working on a construction project and the afternoons either working on the project, teaching English, art, or music to the children, playing soccer, or relaxing. They stayed in dormitory facilities at the orphanage and ate their meals with the children. Before leaving for Mexico, the class raised money to purchase supplies to take with them to the orphanage. While there, discussions were held between the directors of the orphanage and the representative of the school to set up an on-going relationship between the school and the orphanage.

**Reactions to and comments about this project included:**

- The orphanage kind of reminds me of Swiss-family Robinson ... something like going to camp. The kids are great and they appreciate everything we do."(A student)
- "We have [had] to behave well because the directors are so committed to the success of their home, we can't let them down." (A student)

**5. Growing out of the interests and knowledge of a teacher, the members of the French Club planned and presented a French Film Festival for students and the community.** They viewed several films and selected two to be shown in the high school auditorium on a weekend when there were no sporting events taking place. Dividing into two groups, the students became the resident experts on one of the films, researching everything they could find about their film. Within each group, half of the students prepared a pre-viewing introduction to a film that included background information about the actors, the location, and the historical/cultural context. The other half prepared a post-viewing discussion that included the music and photography, as well as the theme and plot. Since many of the audience members did not speak French, both films were shown with the English sub-titles and the presentations were conducted in English.

**Reactions to and comments about this project included:**

- This was a fabulous experience for me! It had been years since I had heard French spoken, much less seen a movie in French, and it was very exciting to see how much of it came back to me while watching these movies. I hope they continue to do this in the future! (A parent)
- I can't believe how much I learned about France while preparing my part of the post-viewing discussion. I was so ready to do it in French and am somewhat disappointed that we had to do it in English instead. But, seeing the enjoyment of the audience was really what counted. (A student)
- Watching my students become wrapped up in their French while working on this project was enough to let me know that all of the work was worth it. (The teacher)

Even though the preceding examples principally illustrate using Spanish, there is no reason why they cannot be adapted to other languages. How can a teacher reach out and involve the community when local resources are not so readily available? The Internet offers incredible access to places where students may use their FL under the supervision of their teacher. Contacting schools in a country where the language is spoken can result in arranging an email exchange between classes. Making videos about their home community to share with other schools will provide cultural insight for the class in the L2 country. Consulting the National Standards book will provide wonderful general ideas, and specific activities for nine languages. In the event that none of the suggestions provided in the Standards for one language fit the situation, consulting the other languages should provide something that can be used or adapted to a particular situation.

Getting students out of the classroom and into the community to research and to interact with the community is what the goal of the Communities strand is all about. Students who are actively engaged in meaningful endeavors are more enthusiastic, learn more, remember more, and are more positive about their language learning experiences. In the words of one student,

"This type of project is so much more worthwhile than some end-of-the-year research project. There are so many ways we can reach out to the community, and this is one that many people don't even think about, let alone do anything about. I'm sure the Spanish-speaking people where we live appreciate it."

As it says in the introduction to the Foreign Language Standards of Learning for Virginia Public Schools,

Knowledge of the foreign language and culture is enhanced for students when they have the opportunity to apply their skills and knowledge beyond the classroom. ... It is the practical application of their language skills that motivates students to continue their language study and develop a life-long interest in participating in the global community. (4)

During their work and after it is completed, students begin to understand the value of community-based experiences to everyone involved in the activity. Perhaps more importantly for the foreign language professional, students begin to understand the value of being able to really speak in another language about things of real importance. An additional plus, interwoven into all of these experiences, the students and teacher find the other four strands of the Five C's of language learning.

There are likely any number of community-based undertakings that can be found for students who are learning a foreign language to explore. Looking at the community with a creative eye, not being held back by what is already being done, and possessing a willingness to take a chance will result in myriad ideas, several of which should be appropriate for your school, community and students. In the language of clichés, my advice is to step up to the plate, take a deep breath, and think outside of the box. If you listen to your students, something will emerge and it will become an exciting adventure for everybody involved.

**RESOURCES**

National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project. Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century. Lawrence, KS: Allen Press, Inc.,1999.

Commonwealth of Virginia. Board of Education. Foreign Language Standards of Learning for Virginia Public Schools. Richmond, VA, 2000.

The author is a 35-year veteran of the high school foreign language classroom and has seen these and many other unique experiences be highly successful and motivational. The purpose of this article is to provide a stimulus to jump-start the creative thinking juices of all teachers at any level.

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**The Fifth Standard – Communities – What does it really mean?  
An Interview with Dr. June Phillips, Co-Chair of the Standards Task Force**

**Why "Communities?"**

Of the five Standards of Foreign Language Learning - Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons and Communities – the last, Communities is perhaps the most confusing and least generally understood by classroom teachers. June Phillips, Project Director of the Standards for Foreign Language Learning Task Force, and Dean at Weber State University, says that the Communities standard represents the long-term goal of all foreign language standards. "It serves as an ultimate goal," she says, "Some advisors to the Task Force said this could be the only standard." What does "Communities" mean as an instructional objective? The Standards define Communities as ... "Participate in multilingual communities at home and around the world." Standard 5.1 is "Students use the language both within and beyond the school setting." Standard 5.2 is "Students show evidence of becoming life-long learners by using the language for personal enjoyment and enrichment." A teacher can measure progress towards the objectives of Standards such as Communication or Cultures in the classroom, but since Communities represents the overall goal of instruction and the behavior generally takes place outside the classroom, it appears, at first hand, impossible to set specific objectives and measure progress. Phillips, however, says that, "... while you can't measure "life-long learning in school, students should be getting the tools" in the classroom. You can set objectives and measure progress based on more short-term goals embedded in activities that lead to engaging the students with multilingual communities. How to Address the Communities Standard in the School: Phillips says that teachers have been using existing activities or creating exciting new ones to help students participate in multilingual communities. Some of these are:

- Study Abroad – Living and studying in a foreign country allows students to be engaged in the larger foreign language community and the culture is experienced first hand. (For more information about how to prepare students for study abroad, click here)
- Foreign Travel – Foreign language teachers organize and lead students on trips to countries where they use the language and experience the culture. (For more information about how to prepare for a class trip abroad, click here)
- Service Learning – Students engage in community service activities in communities in the U.S. where their foreign language is spoken as a native language. Phillips reminds us that, "This is more easily achieved in some languages than others, it lends itself to language groups that are active in the U.S."
- Field Trips - Students visit communities where they can be exposed to the foreign language and culture. (For a video with a webguide about a field trip into a local see Tape # 26 in the Annenberg Teaching Foreign Languages K-12 Library: <http://www.learner.org/resources/series185.html>)
- Guest Speakers / Classroom Visitors – Visitors come into the classroom and engage the students in language and culture activities. (For a video with a webguide about a classroom visit see Tape # 14 in the Annenberg Teaching Foreign Languages K-12 Library: <http://www.learner.org/resources/series185.html>)
- Engaging Students in the Foreign Language Virtual Community – Students participate in the foreign community using language through international email, pod-casts, or blogging.

While these kinds of activities may take time and effort to organize and carry out, Phillips argues that meeting the Communities standards is important and should be integrated into all foreign language activities. First of all, "It helps with motivation," she states. "If the students have a sense of the community that speaks a certain language, then they will want to learn the language more." Engagement with the foreign language community, whether through travel or speakers or writing emails or blogs creates in students a "frame of mind that will encourage them to try and build their knowledge of the culture and of the people, even after their formal classroom experience is over." "You can read about perspectives, but you can't really understand a perspective until you have been engaged with that culture – in that language.," continues Phi.

Additional information about the National Language Service Corps is available at [www.nlscorps.org](http://www.nlscorps.org) or you can call 1-888-SAY-NLSC. llips. "You have to go to the original sources."

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