DIMENSION 2009 Empowerment through Collaboration

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SCOLT
SOUTHERN CONFERENCE ON LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Selected Proceedings of the 2009 Joint Conference of the
Southern Conference on Language Teaching,
the Foreign Language Association of Georgia, and the
Southeastern Association for Language Learning Technology

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Review and Acceptance Procedures
SCOLT *Dimension*

The procedures through which articles are reviewed and accepted for publication in the proceedings volume of the Southern Conference on Language Teaching (SCOLT) begin with the submission of a proposal to present a session at the SCOLT Annual Conference. Once the members of the Program Committee have made their selections, the Editorial Board invites each presenter to submit the abstract of an article that might be suitable for publication in *Dimension*, the annual volume of conference proceedings.

Only those persons who present *in person* at the annual Joint Conference are eligible to have written versions of their presentations included in *Dimension*. Those whose abstracts are accepted receive copies of publication guidelines, which adhere almost entirely to the fifth edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. The names and academic affiliations of the authors and information identifying schools and colleges cited in articles are removed from the manuscripts, and at least three members of the Editorial Board review each of them. Reviewers, all of whom are professionals committed to second language education, make one of four recommendations: "publish as is," "publish with minor revisions," "publish with significant rewriting," or "do not publish."

The editor reviews the recommendations and notifies all authors as to whether their articles will be printed. As a result of these review procedures, at least three individuals decide whether to include an oral presentation in the annual conference, and at least five others read and evaluate each article that appears in *Dimension*.

2009 SCOLT Editorial Board

Introduction

The Southern Conference on Language Teaching (SCOLT), in collaboration with the Foreign Language Association of Georgia (FLAG) and the Southeast Association for Language Learning Technology (SEALLT), held its annual conference March 5-7, 2009, at the Renaissance Atlanta Hotel in downtown Atlanta, Georgia. The SCOLT Board of Directors chose as this year's conference theme "Empowerment through Collaboration." This topic helped participants focus on the importance of making connections with organizations and agencies outside the language profession, a natural result of the keynote speech at the 2008 Conference.

Individuals whose conference proposals were accepted for presentation were invited to write an article based on their conference presentation for possible inclusion in *Dimension 2009*. The articles selected for the present volume reflect a variety of interests within the profession. The authors and contributors to the articles are very diverse, including P-12 classroom teachers, post-secondary faculty, and retired faculty with backgrounds in both the classical and modern languages; administrators and language consultants; members of private industry and of non-profit organizations; and individuals from a variety of careers whose success depends upon their language skills. The first four articles in this volume treat classroom issues, the fifth article makes connections between the classroom and careers, and the sixth and seventh articles focus on connections between languages, careers, and the health of the American economy and educational system.

In "A New Look at Translation," the mother-daughter writing team of Anne and Catherine Fountain examines the perennial question of the place of translation in the modern language classroom. Because today's students are highly proficient in the use of technology, they frequently turn to the Internet for assistance with language assignments. The authors lead readers through a careful explanation of how Web-based machine translation can be an asset in the classroom if students first experience its shortcomings and limitations. The authors also provide examples of how translations have created myths and mistakes that have found their way into the folklore of the profession.

The second article in this volume also focuses on the use of technology in the classroom. In "Establish Your Presence in the Blogosphere," Peter Swanson and Patricia Early offer a step-by-step guide on how to develop Web logs (blogs). Their detailed instructions and personal examples are insightful and should persuade readers to incorporate blogs into lessons as a way to expand resources and enliven assignments.

The third article follows naturally from the second. In "Using Blogs to Enhance Foreign Language Instruction," Carol Semonsky, Susan Boutier, and Zachary Jones describe how blogs are used by language teachers to enhance instruction. The authors report the results of a survey that indicates that students and faculty believe that blogs are useful both as teaching and learning tools.

The focus of the journal shifts from individual classrooms to a district-wide classroom initiative in "The SCOLT Assessment Project: Working Smarter, Not Harder" by Lynne McClendon and Greg Duncan. This article describes SCOLT's collaboration with Richmond County, Georgia, to provide a grant for the professional development of language teachers. The projects developed during the multiyear grant were field tested with classroom teachers and students. In a demonstration of true collaboration, the projects will be made available to other teachers on various Web sites as examples of best practices to support the state of Georgia's Performance Standards.

In their article entitled "Preparing Students for the Teacher Licensure Exam: It's More Than Just the Content" Jana Sandarg and Judy Schomber call for collaboration between language and education faculty in programs of study leading to teacher licensure. The authors point out that the format of certification exams can be problematic if students have not studied abroad or been exposed to a wide variety of cultural experiences; and they call upon faculty to collaborate to help fill the breach.

Mike Petro's keynote speech, "The Center for Economic Development and Support for Foreign Language," from the 2008 SCOLT Conference was moving and powerful. In a break from tradition, SCOLT asked to publish the text of the speech so that readers would be made aware of ongoing collaboration between business, non-profit organizations, and education. This sixth article also serves as a reminder of the support of the business community for education reform.

The final article "Careers and Languages" was a labor of love years in the making. The author, Lynne McClendon, is SCOLT's Executive Director. Several years ago SCOLT commissioned the *Careers Project* to provide readily accessible information on careers that use language skills. This project is now a permanent feature on the SCOLT Web site <www.scolt.org>. In her article, McClendon takes the project one step further by interviewing individuals who depend upon their language proficiency for success in their careers. McClendon also describes recent reports and legislation to support language study and study abroad.

As editor of *Dimension 2009*, I hope that readers will find the articles in this volume to be informative and insightful. It has been my great joy to collaborate with the authors, reviewers, and members of the editorial team to prepare this edition. For individuals interested in submitting a manuscript for review for a future edition of *Dimension*, I call your attention to the "Review and Acceptance Procedures" contained in this volume and posted on SCOLT's Web site.

It is my hope that future editions of *Dimension* will continue to attract a wide variety of authors and readers.

Carol Wilkerson
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A New Look at Translation: Teaching Tools for Language and Literature

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Abstract

Does translation have a place in the modern language or literature classroom? This article argues that as long as translation is recognized as a distinct skill rather than a path to language acquisition it can and should play a role in language instruction. The rising popularity of Web-based machine translation (WBMT) sites among students points to a need to help foreign language learners better understand the translation process. Along with a discussion of how instructors can minimize inappropriate use of WBMT, the article provides examples of how translation in the proper context can be used productively to teach both language and literature. It also shows that teachers have much to gain by supporting translation and interpretation as professional options for advanced language learners. Examples are given in Spanish.

Background

For those who study second language acquisition and foreign language teaching, the thought of translation often conjures up outdated classroom methods or unsuccessful learning strategies. Nonetheless, it is important that language instructors not view translation as uniformly negative in modern language education, particularly since professional translation can be a rewarding career option for language majors. This article proposes that there are, in fact, many language learning situations in which translation can play a part. Once it is recognized as a skill separate from but complementary to language acquisition, translation can be introduced into the classroom as part of a dynamic and effective language curriculum. Translation-based activities can help students appreciate the complex interaction of language, culture, context, and literary production. Integrating translation-based activities can introduce students to professions in translation and interpretation, though it is important to clarify that the term translation is usually used to refer to written work and interpretation to the oral transmission of meaning, and that this article deals only with translation. While the examples given here deal with translation into and from English and Spanish, many of the problems

they illustrate are relevant to other languages as well.

The first part of this article deals with translation in the modern language classroom and specifically with the impact of Web-based machine translation (WBMT), online translation services, and students' use of such services to complete classroom assignments. The article describes how teachers can respond to this trend and argues that Internet translations can introduce advanced language students to the process and profession of translation. The second part describes how examples of translation challenges gleaned from the literature of Spain and Latin America can be used to enhance learning in Spanish language and literature courses. Finally, the article calls upon language teachers to promote the professional work of translators and interpreters and suggests that following best practices means that instructors should not seek to supplant the commercial translator's role. Giving translation its due also gives respect to all who make language expertise the focus of their work.

Translation in the Language Classroom in the Internet Age

For centuries translation and language learning went hand in hand as the grammar translation model used to teach Latin, principally for reading knowledge, was applied to the teaching of modern languages. A growing recognition of the disconnect between grammar translation models and theories of second language acquisition led to the development of communicative approaches to language learning and teaching during the last half of the 20th century. This recognition does not mean that translation has disappeared from the classroom, however. Wilkerson (2008) shows that even when teachers aim to use the target language, English is often employed to translate classroom dialogue. While the place of the first language in the language classroom is the subject of ongoing debate—see, for instance, Rell (2005)—the activities and teaching strategies outlined here are intended to encourage student reflection on the translation process and on the differences between languages and not to replace communicative teaching in the target language.

While translation is largely absent from modern teaching methodologies, the practice and profession of translation is alive and well. With globalization has come a growing need for the translation of texts ranging from employee handbooks to television sitcoms. At the same time, advances in natural language processing and the growth of the Internet have introduced into the world of translation a new tool: Web-based machine translation (WBMT). These automatic online translators, which include Babel Fish, Google Translate, and FreeTranslation.com, were originally designed to give users a basic translation of Web pages or short texts written in another language; and most focus on the translation of English texts into other languages. In recent years, however, WBMT has found a new user in the foreign language student. While little research has been done into students' use of these translation services, Williams (2006) notes that "anecdotal evidence points to widespread use of WBMT for homework and writing assignments" (p. 566).

Advances and Limitations in Machine Translation

Most language professionals are aware of the shortcomings of all types of machine translation (MT) as expressed succinctly in Barreiro and Ranchhod (2005): "the most obvious failure of MT is that it is unable to render publication-ready text" (p. 3). Nonetheless, recent advances in MT mean that early evaluations showing its shortcomings may need to be revisited. For instance, Schairer (1996) compared the output of machine translation with that of professional translators, using various commercial translation software programs to translate an English-language survey into Spanish. A group of bilingual English-Spanish speakers then evaluated the results. For the question "During the past year, do you believe the level of crime in your neighborhood has increased, decreased, or remained about the same?" the machine translation judged most natural by the evaluating group was "En el año pasado le hace toca ese crimen en su barrio ha aumentado, menguante, o quedó acerca del mismo cuando estaba antes de?" (1996, p. 99), a sentence that is only barely intelligible. If we compare this output with the free translation provided by the WBMT service Google Translate in June 2008, *Durante el último año, ¿usted cree que el nivel de delincuencia en su vecindario ha aumentado, disminuido o permanece igual?* (translation realized June 23, 2008, at <http://translate.google.com>), it becomes clear that MT has made substantial progress in the last 12 years. In particular, Google Translate uses a translation system that relies on a large corpus of professionally translated texts and looks for equivalences, a system that it believes holds more promise than the traditional rule-based MT systems that rely on increasingly more extensive dual-language dictionaries.

Despite these advances in machine translation, no WBMT claims to be a replacement for a professional translator. Indeed, as the Google Translate FAQ page explains,

> Even today's most sophisticated software [. . .] doesn't approach the fluency of a native speaker or possess the skill of a professional translator. Automatic translation is very difficult, as the meaning of words depends on the context in which they're used. While we are working on the problem, it may be some time before anyone can offer human quality translations (Google Translate FAQ 2008).

Williams (2006) cites various examples of erroneous English-French translations produced by WBMT, all related to problems of lexical ambiguity and interpretation of the source-language syntax. Indeed, while MT has seen great advances in these two areas–evidenced by comparing the 1996 and 2008 translations cited above–it is still easy to confound WBMT systems. To give a very simple example of lexical ambiguity, the English phrasal verb *look up* can be translated a number of ways in Spanish depending on the context. Two of the most common verbs used to translate *look up* are *mirar*, to look in a certain direction, and *buscar*, to search for a fact or piece of information.

Even in very simple sentences where the choice is clear given the context, Web-based translators have a difficult time choosing the correct equivalent. For the English phrase "I looked up the word in the dictionary," both Google Translate and Free Translation erroneously choose *mirar*. Google Translate gives the translation *Miré la palabra en el diccionario*, which means "I looked at the word in the dictionary," a grammatically correct sentence that fails to convey the meaning of the original. Free Translation makes the additional mistake of translating *up* as a preposition rather than part of a phrasal verb, and thus produces a grammatically impossible sentence in Spanish, *Miré arriba la palabra en el diccionario* (translations realized June 23, 2008, at <http://translate.google.com> and <http://www.freetranslation.com>).

The accuracy of machine translation in the interpretation of syntax and cases of lexical ambiguity may improve, but there are other aspects of translation that MT developers have not even considered. Hatim and Mason (1995) speak of advances in MT and professional translation as separate developments. In the field of translation theory, there are numerous variables to be contended with beyond syntax and vocabulary, including social and regional variation; the register, tone, and genre of discourse; and meaning in its social and cultural context. Without taking these variables into account, contend Hatim and Mason, a translation "puede ser fiel al reflejar el significado denotativo y, sin embargo, no llegar a reproducir la convicción del texto original" [can be faithful in reflecting the denotative meaning and yet not be successful at reproducing the conviction of the original text] (1995, p. 77). In the teaching and evaluation of professional translation, it has been noted that not only machine translation systems commit this type of error; Chesterman (1996, p. 4) comments that "trainee translators often seem to translate like machines, carefully processing every word of the original into a grammatical target-language form."

A few simple examples can serve to illustrate the complexity of the interaction of these variables. Take the English sentence *His office is on the first floor*. A speaker of American English will take this to mean that the office is located at street level. Both Google Translate and Free Translation translate the sentence into Spanish as *Su oficina está en el primer piso* (translations realized June 26, 2008, at <http://translate.google.com> and <http://www.freetranslation.com>) and speakers from Spain and much of Latin America would interpret this translated sentence as meaning that the office is located one floor up from street level; British English speakers would interpret the original sentence the same way. Translation may also require explicit explanation of culture-specific concepts. For instance, the Spanish version given by Google Translate for the phrase *The student must have an overall GPA of 2.75 or higher* is *El estudiante debe tener un GPA de 2,75 o superior* (translation realized June 26, 2008, at <http://translate.google.com>). Although this translation does a fairly good job of rendering the English sentence in Spanish, if the reader does not know that the acronym *GPA* stands for *Grade Point Average* or is not aware that the GPA is calculated on a 4-point scale in the United States, this phrase will still not make much sense.

It is important to note that there are MT researchers who have recognized the need to take these pragmatic aspects of translation into account. Romanov et al. (2003) go so far as to describe the idea of high-quality machine translation as "naive and romantic" (p. 216), because its theoretical underpinnings lie in the work of Chomsky and others who consider human language to be "a kind of calculus" (p. 216). They propose a model of machine translation that integrates a communicative-pragmatic operator, although they are fully aware that this sort of model cannot currently be developed: "Of course, at present, this task cannot be fulfilled on the full scale, since the psycho-physiological nature of this operator is not clear yet" (p. 215).

Web-based Machine Translation in the Language Classroom: Problems and Solutions

While the shortcomings of MT may be clear to those who work in the language profession, the typical language student has little knowledge about the process of translation and may not possess the linguistic proficiency to evaluate source-language outputs produced by WBMT. This lack of knowledge can make WBMT a dangerous tool for students, who believe it to be a quick and easy way to complete essays and homework assignments. In addition, while students are aware that copying text from the Internet constitutes plagiarism, for many the use of WBMT is a gray area. Again, while there are currently no quantitative studies of student attitudes towards WBMT, individual students have likened the use of online translation services to the use of online dictionaries, showing that they may not fully understand the ethical implications of using WBMT to complete assignments. The wider issue of cyberplagiarism is addressed by Atkins and Nelson (2001) and Urbina Ramírez (2004); and Luton (2003) speaks specifically to cyberplagiarism and the use of WBMT.

Confronted with the incursion of WBMT in the language classroom, what can the instructor do to prevent misuse of online translators? A good first step is to institute a policy banning their use, either on a class-by-class basis or at the departmental level, and to explain to students why their use constitutes plagiarism. However, the existence of free WBMT also presents teaching opportunities. Williams (2006) discusses how specific classroom activities using online translators can serve to focus students' attention on certain target-language structures and to improve electronic literacy. Building on this idea of turning a potential problem into a teaching aid, teachers can use WBMT to bring translation back into the classroom–not as a technique for language learning but as a skill in its own right. Providing students with an appropriate introduction to translation can help to clarify for them the difference between translation and language acquisition and may even point some students toward further study and career paths in translation and interpretation. According to Carreres (2006, p. 8), students favor inclusion of translation instruction within modern language degree programs. Although the study was small, 100% of the language majors surveyed responded in the affirmative when asked whether translation should be taught as part of a modern languages

undergraduate degree.

Activities that focus on translation as a skill may not be appropriate for every level of language instruction, however. While WBMT services may be misused by students at any level of instruction, novice and lower intermediate-level learners are not likely to have the language skills needed to benefit from activities that involve analysis of translated texts or actual translation. These students can benefit from seeing carefully selected examples of the limitations of WBMT and from explicit instruction about how language acquisition differs from translation. However, most of the translation activities outlined below are designed for advanced-level courses in grammar and composition, as they require a relatively high level of proficiency in the target language. At any level, using WBMT as a starting point for a discussion of translation has the added benefit of making students aware of the limits of such programs.

There is great potential for developing activities around WBMT that introduce students to key concepts of translation. An instructor could use either of the English examples provided above, *His office is on the first floor or The student must have an overall GPA of 2.75 or higher*. Instructors can also create activities that have students translate phrases and then reflect on their own process of translation. While some in the profession may object to the practice of having students translate into their second language (L2), Carreres (2006) points out that in practice even professional translators often are asked to translate into their L2.

A Model Activity for Teaching about Translation and WBMT

In this section, we will outline in some detail one model activity in order to give the reader an idea of the sort of translation activities that we envision for the advanced language classroom. The model activity both demonstrates the deficiencies of WBMT and introduces students to the translation profession, as one element is a comparison of a machine translation and a professional translation. The activity also asks students to engage directly with a main source of online translations by choosing a text from Google Translate's own page of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ), found at <http://www.google.com/help/faq_translation.html>. This Web page contains some 20 questions and answers and has a corresponding version in Spanish, which can be found at <http://www.google.com/intl/es/help/faq_translation.html>. While this sample activity involves English-Spanish translation, it could be modified for use with other language pairs.

The first step in this activity, which can be assigned as homework or realized in class as long as each student has access to a computer, is to have students choose one of the questions and answers from the English-language FAQ. The students can either cut and paste both question and answer into a word processing document to be printed out or write them out on a separate sheet of paper. Students will then access the main page of Google Translate, <http://translate.google.com>, paste or type the full text of their question and answer in

the box provided, and have the program translate this text into Spanish. The student should copy the machine-translated text into the same document as the original English version and, if assigned as homework, print out the texts to bring to class. Students should also be instructed to read over both the original and translated versions of the text and to note any problems they see in the translation.

The second part of the activity can again be assigned as homework or completed in class if computers are available to students. Once the students have examined both the English version and the Spanish translation of their chosen text, the instructor can provide them with the URL of Google Translate's Spanish-language FAQ, <http://www.google.com/intl/es/help/faq_translation.html>. Each student should then compare the machine translation with the text that Google actually provides for its Spanish-speaking visitors. Students likely will be surprised at how different the two Spanish-language texts are. To illustrate this point, we will reproduce the three texts that the students would see were they to have chosen the original question *What is statistical machine translation?* from Google Translate's FAQ. First, here is the original text from the English-language Google Translate *FAQ*:

What is statistical machine translation?

Most state-of-the-art, commercial machine-translation systems in use today have been developed using a rule-based approach and require a lot of work to define vocabularies and grammars.

Our system takes a different approach: we feed the computer billions of words of text, both monolingual text in the target language, and aligned text consisting of examples of human translations between the languages. We then apply statistical learning techniques to build a translation model. We've achieved very good results in research evaluations.

Here is the Spanish-language translation produced using the Google Translate application (translation realized February 13, 2008, at <http://translate.google.com>):

¿Qué es la traducción automática estadística?

La mayor parte del estado de la técnica, comercial máquina-sistemas de traducción en uso hoy en día han sido desarrolladas utilizando un enfoque basado en normas, y requieren una gran cantidad de trabajo para definir vocabularios y gramáticas.

Nuestro sistema adopta un enfoque diferente: que alimentan el ordenador miles de millones de palabras de texto, tanto monolingüe texto en la lengua de destino, y alineado de texto que consta de ejemplos humanos de las traducciones entre los idiomas. A continuación, se aplican técnicas de aprendizaje estadístico para construir un modelo de traducción. Hemos conseguido muy buenos resultados en las evaluaciones de investigación.

For the sake of comparison, here is the same question and answer from

Google's Spanish-language FAQ site, Preguntas frecuentes sobre el Traductor de Google:

¿En qué consiste la traducción automática estadística?

La mayoría de los sistemas de traducción automática de última generación que se comercializan hoy en día se basan en un conjunto de reglas y requieren mucho tiempo y esfuerzo por parte de lingüistas para elaborar vocabularios y gramáticas.

Nuestro sistema funciona de forma diferente. Introducimos miles de millones de palabras y texto en el sistema, tanto monolingüe en el idioma al que se traduce, como texto alineado compuesto de traducciones elaboradas por traductores profesionales en ambos idiomas. A continuación, aplicamos técnicas de aprendizaje estadísticas para crear un modelo de traducción. Según estudios realizados en este campo, los resultados que hemos obtenido son más que satisfactorios.

Even though students may not understand all of the subtle differences between the machine translation and the professionally translated version, they certainly can see that the two texts are very different. With the help of the instructor, they can begin to appreciate the relative fluency and natural flow of the professional translation and discover that translating word for word or phrase for phrase, as WBMT programs generally do, produces a text of inferior quality. Finally, they will discover that Google does not use the translation software it has developed to translate its own Web pages. This realization serves as a powerful reminder that online translation services are not designed to produce high-quality documents but to give the reader a general idea of the content of the original text.

Translation and the Teaching of Literature

Before we discuss the potential role of translation and translations in the literature classroom, it is important to appreciate that literature can take many forms, can be found in everyday examples such as short poems, and can be taught at virtually every stage of language learning. Thus a discussion of techniques for teaching literature can be relevant for the language classroom as well. As Comerio (2008) notes,

Literature can be considered 'language in situation'— authors mold and accommodate language, scattering their writing with silences, pauses, and deviations which represent the complexity of the human world. The reader can savor the diversity of meanings in a language, and can delight in the beauty of word harmony (p. 22).

Simple examples from and about the works of Spanish American writers such as Isabel Allende, Pablo Neruda, and José Martí can be used to build student investigative skills, to focus on grammar, and to reveal the complexity of vocabulary and the importance of cultural and historical context. In both beginning and

advanced classes, examples of translation can help students develop an appreciation for the distinctive qualities of a language and the challenges in conveying accurate versions in English.

Translation and Context

Earlier in this article we mentioned the significance of context in translation, and examples of mistranslation in literature can serve to highlight its importance. A 2001 paperback copy of Isabel Allende's *Retrato en sepia* has on the back cover, along with an elegant photo of the author, a credit to the photographer, Allende's husband William Gordon, and a caption that reads *Fotografía del autor* (photograph of the author). The word *autor* clearly indicates a male author in Spanish, whereas the appropriate word for the female author, Isabel Allende, would be *autora*. Someone in the book production process neglected to connect the photo and the statement.

An example from Pablo Neruda's poem "Vienen por las islas (1493)," part of *Canto general*, is intriguing right from the title. What does *por* mean in this instance? At least one translator, Merwin, has decided that *por* is "for" and has conveyed the title in English as "They Come for the Islands (1493)" (Neruda, 1990, pp.194-95); but another meaning is possible if one takes into account the context of *Canto general.* Neruda's epic of Latin American history in verse gives a sweeping account of the conquest and its consequences, a saga in which the islands of the Caribbean were but a first step. Perhaps Neruda meant "through" the islands, a word that suggests the rapacious and continuing pattern of conquest. Another poem, "X", of *Alturas de Macchu Picchu* [sic] begins with the line "*Piedra en la piedra,*" and a reader must decide how to interpret *en.* Does it mean "Stone within stone" as translated by Tarn (Neruda, 1990, p. 189), or should it be "Stone upon stone," as conveyed by Eisner (Neruda, 2004, p. 85)? *Por* and *en* are basic prepositions in Spanish that are usually taught in a first-year course. However, in Neruda's poetry they take on new significance when viewed from the perspective of translation.

Sometimes a translation can reveal a failure to understand historical context. In 1891 José Martí gave a rousing speech to Cubans in Tampa, and in the course of building patriotic feeling, he recounted the misdeeds of Latin American tyrants. In Martí´s discourse he mentioned "el Paraguay lúgubre de Francia" (Martí, 1963-73, vol.4, p. 270). The translation was ". . . the lamentable Paraguay of France" (Martí, 1999, 134), as if the reference were to the country of France and not to Paraguay's dictator, Gaspar Rodríguez de Francia, known as Dr. Francia.

Translating from a Translation

What happens when one translates from a translation rather than seeking and using the original text? A curious editing mistranslation appears in an entry in the "Members in the News" section of the May 2008 Newsletter of the American Literary Translators Association. The reference lists Margaret Sayers

Peden as the translator of "El sumo de nuestros días," in what appears to be a word-for-word rendering of the title as translated into English *The Sum of Our Days* (p. 12). *Sumo*, however, is an adjective that means "utmost"; and Spanish usage favors the definite article *los* instead of the possessive pronoun *nuestros*, as is evident in the original title in Spanish, *La suma de los días* (Allende, 2007). It should be noted that in this latest work Allende lauds Peden's skill as a translator and her ability to find and correct items that the author had not noticed (Allende, 2008).

Students in literature classes may find that a comparison of translations and of translations made from translations can reveal literary origins as well as nuanced differences. The term *retranslation* refers to a new or second translation of written material. For example, a work such as *Don Quixote* has been translated into English numerous times over the centuries. However, when translations are produced based on translations, the process is called *backtranslating*, such as the example in the preceding paragraph. When a translation goes from one language (say English) to another language (say Spanish) and then from the second language (Spanish) back to the original language (English) the end product is a "doubled back" version. Taking a brief phrase or selection and showing either retranslations or backtranslations would give an idea of the linguistic challenges inherent in moving from one language to another. Edgar Allan Poe's "The Pit and the Pendulum" has been translated into Spanish by Argentine author, Julio Cortázar, and the first lines of Cortázar's translation include the phrase ". . . y cuando por fin me desataron" (Poe 1992, vol. 1 p. 74). A translation from the Spanish translation back into English, rendered "when they finally untied me," is faithful to the Spanish translation but quite different from Poe's original ". . . when they at length unbound me" (Poe 1991, p. 184). This example of backtranslation highlights the difficulty of recreating Poe's distinct word choices of "at length" and "unbound."

For a brief assignment with a focus on style, an instructor can ask students to read two distinct renderings into English of a short literary passage and then ask groups or individuals to compare these translations. The assignment could be further developed by providing a backtranslated version of each of the English translations and asking students to compare the different versions. An example might be to compare the language and style in translations of Cervantes' *Don Quixote* over the centuries. How would a passage from Shelton's 1612 English version of the first part of *Don Quixote* compare with the same passage taken from Edith Grossman's newly translated *Quixote* (2003)? Were both of these English translations to be translated back into Spanish, how would each compare with Cervantes' original Spanish text, and what variations and possible errors are brought to light?

Mistakes in translation can sometimes be highlighted by doubling back. For example, many of José Martí's verses from his book of poetry written in the Catskill Mountains in 1890 are sung in versions of the popular song *Guantanamera.* As a result, many people believe that Martí wrote a work called *Guantanamera* or that he is the creator of a song popularized by folksinger Pete Seeger. In the table of contents of *The Cuba Reader* (2003), a book that presents documents of Cuban

literature and history in translation, there is a listing for "Guantanamera" by José Martí. However, the lyrics of the song *Guantanamera* are taken from various poems in Martí's 1891 work, *Versos sencillos*, and the idea to combine a popular Cuban song with lines from poems by Martí did not occur until the middle of the 20th century (Martí, 2005, p.12). Assigning students the task of locating the poem "Guantanamera" is an excellent way to let them discover that the title does not exist among Martí's original works.

For Spanish teachers, translation can play a unique role in Hispanic literature of the United States. For example, how would one translate a dual-language poem like Gustavo Pérez Firmat's "Bilingual Blues" (*Triple Crown,* p.164)? What can be gleaned from a contrast of the two, quite different, translations into Spanish of García's Cuban American novels, *Dreaming in Cuban* (1993) and *The Agüero Sisters* (1997), one written in the Spanish of Spain and one with a more distinctively Cuban flavor? How would portions of these novels read when translated from Spanish back to English? What happens to slang, to sound, to meter, to rhyme, and to the musical effects of verse when translated and later doubled back (Frame, 1989, p. 71)? Translation can instill a respect for close reading of text, and translation exercises often provide an insightful examination of the essential qualities of literature.

The Curious Case of the Popol Vuh

Another text that provides an unusual set of circumstances for teaching about translation is the *Popol Vuh*, the sacred book of the Maya Quiché of Guatemala. This work was written in the 16th century in the Mayan language with Roman letters. It was discovered in 1701 by a Spanish priest, Francisco Ximénez, who preserved the transcribed Mayan version and wrote a translation into Spanish. In 1854 the manuscript was rediscovered by a French cleric (Brasseur), who translated it into French (*Popol Vuh: Libro sagrado de los Mayas*, 1999, p.7). The version of the *Popol Vuh* produced in Spanish by the Guatemalan author Miguel Ángel Asturias was based on a French version by Georges Raynaud, with whom Asturias studied in Paris (Chang Rodríguez & Filer, 2004, p 365). Tedlock's translation into English is described by Castro-Klarén as masterful with its "invaluable interdisciplinary introduction and an ethnohistorical glossary and notes… [that] has no equivalent in Spanish" (2005, p.18), perhaps due to the fact that he took the text of the *Popol Vuh* to Mayan–speaking communities, where oral narratives and the comments of a native Quiché reader informed the translation and provided a cultural context (*Popol vuh* 1996, pp.13-18).

Tedlock's technique raises questions for Spanish teachers. As Castro-Klarén (2005) notes, Departments of Modern Languages and Departments of Spanish often insist that Spanish-language sources be used in courses dealing with Spanish America even if a text's origin is in another language and even if, as in this case, the language imposed is that of conquerors and colonizers who did much to destroy Mayan texts. Tedlock's techniques also help students appreciate the important role of authentic cultural sources.

Translators and Translation in the Language Professions

The need for qualified translators and the number of professionals being trained to meet that demand have grown considerably since the founding of the American Translators Association (ATA) in 1959. Writing nearly 20 years ago as president of that organization, Hammond (1990, pp. 137-138) speaks to a growing professionalism within the translation community, noting that "social position and payment levels have risen." As one indication of the profession's growth since the early 1990s, she cites the membership of the ATA at over 3,000 (1990, p. 138); the ATA Web site lists a membership of over 10,000 in 2008. The organizers of the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing planned for more than 5,000 translators and interpreters with services in more than 50 languages, highlighting the role that translation and interpreting play on the world stage ("Five Thousand Translators for Beijing Olympics" 2008, June, p. 19). In the United States, field-specific texts such as *Common Phrase Translation: Spanish for English Speakers - For Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, and Speech Therapy* (Thrash, 2006) reflect the need for translation aids designed for those who interact in the growing Latino population in the United States.

The demand for translation and interpreting services by government agencies, businesses, volunteer groups, and international organizations, makes professional translation a career option for many language majors. While full translator training requires specialized study, exposure to translation and its complexity in more general language and literature courses can be a first step for students interested in pursuing translation as a career.

As the demand for translation grows it is not without problems, particularly the use of machine translation and the requirement that untrained individuals or volunteers produce translations as part of their job or volunteer work. It is important that teachers as well as translation professionals emphasize that simply speaking another language or having a bachelor's degree in a foreign language is not enough to qualify someone as a translator, and the activities presented in this article can serve to drive this point home for students. Students interested in pursuing translation or interpretation will find a growing number of textbooks, courses, and degree programs designed to train language-proficient individuals for professional careers, including *Handbook of Spanish-English Translation* (Aranda, 2007) and *Translation Teaching: From Research to the Classroom* (Colina, 2003).

Conclusions

Examining translation and translations can be a useful pedagogical tool. When assignments demonstrate deficiencies in automatically-generated translations, students realize the importance of what they are learning in a language classroom and the temptation to borrow on-line translations diminishes. Examples from literature can be employed at virtually every level to highlight the distinctive qualities of a text, difficulties that translators face, the significance of words, and

the vitality of elements of style. Even mistakes and misunderstanding revealed during translation have an important role in foreign language teaching. By presenting translation as a unique skill that must be developed with practice and study, language teachers recognize the important work of their colleagues who are professional translators. As long as translation is presented as a skill separate from language acquisition but useful in its own right, both students and teachers can benefit from its inclusion in the foreign language curriculum.

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2

ESTABLISH YOUR PRESENCE IN THE BLOGOSPHERE: A GUIDE TO BLOG DEVELOPMENT FOR THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

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Abstract

As the wave of technology progresses, the static Web page has given way to the Weblog (blog) as a medium for delivering information. The blog has moved the technology forward with its bidirectional communication ability. This article discusses the evolution of blogs, important considerations when establishing a blog presence, and directions for creating blogs. Online examples are given to guide the reader.

Background

Weblogs, or blogs, believed to be first used by John Berger 11 years ago (Rachael, 2005), originated as online diaries that reflect the personality of the author (Blood, 2002; Winer, 2003). They rapidly developed into independent journalism conduits serving a multitude of purposes for targeted audiences. It was not long before educators recognized and explored the communicative potential of blogs. Unlike many multimedia tools available to educators, blogs can be developed by individuals with rudimentary computer knowledge, as they do not require users to learn to program HTML or Web authoring software

Using the Web page model, information flows from the teacher to the readers, reinforcing a Positivist model of instruction. Blogs, on the other hand, provide individuals a medium for multidirectional communication while affording the same, if not greater, functionality as static Web pages. Blogs form an interactive virtual environment where bloggers (blog authors) share opinions, experiences, and information with readers, who, in turn, have the ability to become co-authors by posting comments to blog contents. At present, blogs have been categorized by specific purposes, such as personal blogs, press blogs, group blogs, project management blogs, library blogs, and instructional and institutional blogs (Altun,

2005). Educators at all levels are developing blogs currently to be used as repositories for external links, multimedia resources, and even academic discussions among scholars.

In this article, the authors discuss the communicative possibilities inherent in blogs, giving particular attention to the different requirements and functions of blogs in elementary, secondary, and higher education. The authors also address the process and considerations for best practices in instructional blogging, including the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning* (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 1999).

Theoretically grounded in social learning theory, blogs enrich social interaction among participants. Cognitive learning theorists maintain that assigning meaning to information is efficiently realized through individuals' interaction with the social environment. Vygotsky (1978) claims the social environment plays a significant role in cognitive development. Likewise, Piaget (1973) posits that one of the factors affecting cognitive development is social interaction, a prerequisite for intellectual development. Further, Bandura (1989) argues that learning occurs through constant interaction among individuals, behaviors, and the environment. Thus, interaction between learners and teachers appears to have an impact on the learning process in instructional settings. Traditionally, students interact socially in face-to-face in classroom settings, but such interaction can be diminished by instruction that is more teacher-centered than student-centered. However, by providing a medium for social interaction among students and teachers that extends beyond the boundaries of the traditional classroom, a collaborative learning environment can be created in which students and teachers can share their ideas and experiences can be created (Altun, 2005).

A review of the literature reveals that students have positive attitudes toward using blogs in the classroom. Barbosa and Serrano (2005) reported that students find blogs to be an interesting medium that was easy to use and that they valued peers' comments on their postings. Dickey (2004) found that the use of blogs during teacher training facilitated socialization, interaction, and peer dialogue in small groups and reduced students' perceptions of isolation and alienation in Web-based distance learning environments. Wang and Fang (2005) investigated the benefits of blogs for collaborative learning purposes. The authors reported positive results showing that the use of Weblogs increased students' confidence in learning, and the efficiency of their group work and social skills increased through use of blogs. Xie and Sharma (2004) conducted interviews with nine doctoral students to investigate student opinions of blog usage in instructional settings. Students reported that blogs were helpful for learning and thinking, providing students with a group identity and allowing them to discover and manipulate new technologies. However, students who had not been exposed to blogs prior to the class expressed some hesitation, citing a lack of confidence in this medium and their discomfort with the fact that their opinions and comments could be read by their peers.

Williams and Jacobs (2004) found that blogs could transform the way instructional technology is applied in higher education. The researchers analyzed data from 102 volunteers exposed to blogs in two different classes. Of the participants who did not use blogs, 66% stated that they did not find the activity worth doing or they were not sure whether the activity would help them. However, of the participants who used blogs, two-thirds commented that blogs served as educational environments to facilitate learning, three-quarters reported blogs to be advantageous in terms of social interaction, and 57% claimed that they wanted blogs as an instructional tool in their class activities.

Issues for Consideration in Setting Up a Blog

The development of a blog for a foreign language class requires the creator to ponder several important preliminary considerations such as hosting, security, educational purpose, design, complexity, audience, and best practices in the profession. In this section, we address each of these considerations and we discuss the step-by-step process to build and manage a blog.

Hosting and Access

Hosting a blog requires the author to examine several issues, each with its own advantages and disadvantages. Many hosting services are available, including *Blogger*, *WordPress*, and *EduBlogs*. These blog hosts provide registered users either a free or paid service with ample access to their server space, thereby eliminating the need for users to locate or maintain costly private server space. While these hosts may appear to be the most attractive option for educators, firewall access to these sites often can be restricted by school and district administrators. Therefore, before establishing a blog presence on a public server, we recommend that teachers consult with district technology support personnel to determine which options are readily accessible.

If access is restricted by school policy, some blog services such as *Wordpress* and *EduBlogs* allow users to download the blog framework to a local server to be installed and maintained by the school, district, or individual. Hosting the blog on a school server can reduce concern regarding public access to student work and posting of opinions and comments, as students, parents, and other contributors to the blog would have to logon to the school server to gain access to the blog before being able to read and respond to postings. Additionally, student data and information would be stored on the school server and not on a public server. Another consideration is reliable network access. With hosted services, the service provider is responsible for the maintenance, backup and reliability of the blog site. This process relieves the author or school district from any associated expenses and efforts involved in data storage and backup. Conversely, it also removes any control or local authority over such activities. Teachers have little recourse if the public server is down for maintenance and the hosting entity is not responsible for informing users of potential service outages. All of these

considerations should be explored in advance with the school's technical support team.

Security

All blog software contains elements to assist in guarding the privacy of the author and the readers. Although these features may vary in configuration and in naming protocol, essentially each service provider enables similar privacy options. For example, the blog author has the ability to limit readership to only selected readers, to allow readership only after registration on the blog by interested individuals, or to make the blog publicly available so that anyone can post comments. The blogger can elect to make the site searchable via search engines (i.e. *Google*) or not, effectively assuring the relative invisibility of the blog to all except those who search for it specifically by name or URL.

Most blog software programs also offer an additional degree of page-level security in which pages and posts can be hidden at the time of writing and released at a later date. In this way, pages can be authored in advance and made available to students at the instructionally appropriate time. Blog authors also have the ability to limit access to certain pages or posts via password protection. Some pages may be specifically for parents, others for students. Some content, such as quizzes, could be relatively safeguarded. This option would allow only those readers who know the password to view the materials and comments on that page, thereby allowing instructors to decide who has access to what information.

Once located or accessed, an individual's ability to post comments on a blog site can be further constrained by the options the blogger selects. Once posted, the author can moderate comments, approving them for publication, editing them, or deleting them altogether. The author also has the discretion to disallow comments, to require a potential commenter register for the blog, or to allow comments by any readers. Blog editing permits the author to retroactively remove or edit inappropriate commentary as needed. Through judicious use of these options, blog creators protect themselves against negative or harmful comments and protect their readers from exposure to virtual threats.

Finally, student privacy and safety are also important security considerations. Photos of students (minors) cannot be posted without waivers of consent from parents and information that could expose students to outside threats, such as full name, address, and other personal information, should not be posted on a publicly accessible blog. Adherence to these guidelines provides teachers with opportunities to speak with students about Internet safety and personal privacy, issues of increasing importance. Grades, sensitive student work, and teacher evaluations of student performance should not be shared on blogs.

Educational and Scholarly Uses of Blogs

With numerous templates, flexible design, and an increasing variety of add-ons and plug-ins, known as widgets, blogs can be formatted to serve the

needs of educators at every level. In the language classroom the blog can serve as a repository of class resources, as a vehicle for communication, or as a means of peer-to-peer interaction. At its most basic function, a blog serves the purpose of communicating information from the author to an intended audience. The audience can include the community, parents, and the students themselves. Before establishing a blog presence, we recommend that educators consider the specific purpose for their blog. For example, for an elementary French teacher interested in using technology for communication with parents and students, the format and content of the blog could consist of class calendars, external resources, or even information regarding parent-teacher conferences or school functions. The same teacher could post enrichment activities, such as links to games, printable auxiliary worksheets, and streaming audio resources to students. Secondary school language teachers may use the blog to provide enrichment opportunities to engage students in deeper discussions of class content and cultural learning. Additionally, the blog serves as a repository for multimedia resources, such as PowerPoint presentations, audio, video, and other multimodal stimuli that factor into Multiple Intelligence theory (Gardner, 1993).

Blogs may also focus on faculty professional development, academic discussions on best practices, and even research. For scholars, the purpose for entering the blogosphere is "to reach the 'digital natives', namely our students and to add to the public sphere of knowledge as scholars, teachers in higher education" (Kirby & Cameron, 2008, p. 16). Academic blogging for scholars has emerged as a powerful tool for sharing and promoting research within their respective fields and areas of expertise. Through the widespread availability of the Internet, academic debate and intellectual development is no longer limited by location and can extend beyond the brick-and-mortar campus.

Design and Complexity

Available software, templates, widgets, and packaged digital media allow educators to focus on the content of the blog more so than does traditional Web page (HTML) authoring. However, some design and layout considerations at the initiation of the blog will save much effort in the long run. As we discussed in the previous section, selecting and authoring a blog for a specific purpose establishes the foundation for the functional aspects of the blog, and design considerations naturally follow. Another important consideration is ease of navigation for the blog audience. We have found that fewer features equates to lower complexity, a motivation to not add superfluous features to blogs. Simpler, cleaner designs appear to reduce audience anxiety and promote more immediate engagement and interaction.

Audience

Bloggers must be cognizant of their readers' technological and intellectual abilities. We suggest that passages for K-12 community use short sentences,

avoid jargon, employ terminology familiar to the audience, write to inform and not to impress, and use the active voice (The Informatics Review, 2004). Knowing the intended audience will help the blogger tailor postings and discussions that engage readers encourage multidirectional conversation and participation.

After careful consideration of the aforementioned issues, the neo-blogger can begin the process of establishing a blog presence. The next step is to identify and select the most appropriate host and software for the blog.

Blog Tools

Hosting Considerations

Blog authors have numerous tools to choose from when establishing their blog presence, and new tools are being developed all the time to suit different requirements and audiences. Many course management systems, such as the open-source *Moodle*, include blog tools for seamless integration of blogs into courses. Many free hosting services are available for the user who does not have institutional access to blog software. At the time of this writing, the three most prominent hosting services used by educators are *Blogger*, *Edublogs*, and *WordPress*. Each tool has unique qualities, advantages, and disadvantages and advantages; therefore, we recommend that educators experiment with each hosting service to identify the host that is most appropriate to the design, intended function, and audience of the blog.

Three Prominent Tools for Bloggers

Blogger, part of the *Google* suite of tools available at <https://www.blogger.com>, is an easy, entry-level blog host for novice bloggers. Account creation is fast and free. One of the primary advantages of *Blogger* is its relationship with other *Google* tools, facilitating the incorporation of many types of media into the blog environment. However, *Blogger* is somewhat more limited than other tools and offers fewer choices in exchange for ease of use. In addition, because *Blogger* is a *Google* tool, the plug-ins and functionalities are limited to encourage the use of other *Google* applications. As a result, while the host has streamlined the integration of media and editing through the interrelatedness of Google applications, *Blogger* capabilities are often uniquely proprietary to *Google*.

Another free tool on the market is *Edublogs* <www.edublogs.org>, a host that provides service specifically to teachers, with user information, tutorials, and recommendations written with educators in mind. One potential advantage to using this blog host is that school administrators may be more inclined to grant access to *Edublogs* as opposed to other public blogs. However, because it is targeted to a limited and often novice audience, ease of use once again translates into limited options for formatting, plug-ins, and other tools.

As post-secondary educators, we selected *WordPress* as the hosting service for our blogs. There are two hosting options: *WordPress* saves the blog on its server, maintains the server, and provides a limited, but ample space for data storage; or bloggers can download the free platform onto a local server if there is adequate technical support team can maintain the server. For ease of entry into the blogging community, we recommended that educators begin with the hosted version and then migrate their blog to a local server when they have more experience blogging. *WordPress* provides many plug-ins that allow for media incorporation of a wide variety of formats not limited by proprietary development. In addition, because the community of users is proficient in technology, plug-ins, and templates are created and shared continuously among its user groups.

Entering the Blogosphere

Naming Considerations

A great title can contribute tremendously to the success of a blog. We suggest titles that give information about the author, the site's content, and the site's focus. Bloggers should think of keywords or phrases that search engines can use to find their site. Since the inception of blogs 11 years ago, the number of blogs worldwide has grown to an estimated 112.8 million blogs, not including the 72.82 million Chinese blogs counted by The China Internet Network Information Center (Helmond, 2008). Therefore, we recommend that authors search the Internet to ensure unique and appropriate titles and to avoid trademark conflicts.

Developing Blogs

As mentioned earlier, *WordPress* is the host for our blogs. In this section we outline the steps in developing a blog using *WordPress* as an example. We suggest that readers go to <www.wordpress.com> and construct a blog as they read this article. The first step is to register. At the top right of the homepage there is a tab for new users to register for an account. After entering a user name and password, *WordPress* guides the blogger through a series of steps to create the blog name and set the language that the author will use. *WordPress* allows users to choose whether the blog will appear in search engines and public listings around *WordPress*.com.

In the next step, the site sends an e-mail message with information and a link that first-time users need to activate the blog account. Users also are offered a name and password information. For security reasons, we recommend that bloggers save this information into a word processing document, even though *WordPress* will send the information later in a separate e-mail message. Once reg-

istered, users need to logon to the site. The page that appears first is the Dashboard, an administration panel that allows bloggers to control features related to author identity and site activity. Subpanels on the Dashboard allow users to compose posts and pages, add links, and pay for storage capacity upgrades. Moving from left to right, the subpanels are titled Write, Manage, Design, Comments, and Upgrade. We recommend that readers take a few minutes to familiarize themselves with each subpanel by clicking on the different tabs to explore what each contains.

The Design tab allows bloggers to create their blog space. *WordPress* boasts a large number of themes and options from which to choose. Each theme has a brief description below a sample picture of how the homepage will appear. Again, we recommend that bloggers consider the intended audience and select an age-appropriate theme that will be easily negotiated by students and parents. Once the user has selected a theme, bloggers can then Extras and a Custom Image Header. Educators might want to add Widgets such as calendars or blogsroll (links to different internet Web sites), a search button for information contained on the blog, a list of drop-down categories (such as Homework or Syllabus), videos, or blog statistics to mention just a few. Widgets can be added or deleted later; therefore, it is not necessary to decide everything for the blog at this moment. Once the widgets are chosen, users should the Visit Site button to inspect the blog creation process thus far.

We now direct readers to the Write page so that bloggers create pages to display on the blog. The *WordPress* default page directs individuals to write a page and title and then gives the blogger the opportunity to tell the audience about the specifics of the page. Additionally, links can be added to pages to direct the audience to different sites. The editor has features of most word processors with the addition of icons to add media (video, audio, PowerPoint presentations, pdf files, and internet links). There is also a tab to show HTML programming code. As pages are being developed, the blogger can preview, save, or publish them. *WordPress* saves the author's posts every minute on a server to guard against computer failure or crashes.

We recommend that FL educators first create the About the Author page, including a short biography and an interesting image or photo to stimulate reader interest. Additionally, we suggest that the teacher add a short piece describing the intent and use of the blog, adding any links to various sites that may help illuminate the conceptual framework of the site itself. Teachers should also post contact information and any pertinent school information.

The process for creating additional pages and posting comments follows similar procedures. The blogger begins at the Manage subpanel and chooses the Page option just below. The author selects the page on which to place the posting and same text editor appears requesting a title for the page as well as the post itself. Initial posts can be used as a method to introduce the audience to the page. FL teachers might create different pages representing the *Standards*, different language levels (French 1 or French 2), or chronological listings (Week 1, Week 2, Week 3, and so forth). Pages could be created for presentations, lecture notes, additional readings, or podcasts.

Once the pages are developed, the audience can find the intended information and post comments. After comments are posted, each commenter receives a message that the postings will be moderated by the blog author. In turn, the author receives an e-mail when a comment has been posted to the blog, and when logging in, author sees a red highlighted square above the Comment subpanel. A click on the Comment tab leads the blogger to the comment, where it awaits approval or where it can be deleted.

Examples from the FL Classroom

To assist readers FL teachers, we developed two different blogs. We urge readers to view them online as they progress through the remainder of the article. The first <2009blogsample1.wordpress.com> utilizes the Cutline theme, described as a squeaky clean, minimalistic two-column wonder. This template allows users to replace the top image with a different image of the blogger's choice. We opted to leave the default image and started by creating four different pages in addition to the homepage: Assignments, Calendars, Course Information, and Instructors.

The different pages on the blog are found above the image in alphabetical order, unless the blogger wants to order the pages manually. Parents and students only need to click on each word to open the pages. This blog is an example for an elementary school FL classroom blog. The grade school FL teacher can direct students and parents to the different pages with notes and class calendars. Students and parents only need to touch the calendar dates that are highlighted in blue text to see what assignments are due. Clearly, posting a digital calendar of events quickly becomes an appealing option for busy parents who can assess their children's assignments online. Another advantage of this type of blog is two-way conversation between the author and the intended audience. For parents and guardians who want to stay involved in their children's education, blogs provide an environment for dialogue and requests for information. This type of environment may assist the innovative FL teacher in the continual refinement of the educational experience for everyone involved.

In addition to handy calendars and the interactive dialogue, the elementary FL educator can post daily, weekly, or monthly assignments. As an example, we created a table using Microsoft Word and pasted it on the page. The FL teacher would post weekly lesson plans as pdf or Word files for download. Parents or guardians could then access these files and post assignments in a visible place at home. Such a system would be beneficial when students were absent, enabling parents to see assignments their children needed to complete.

The blog has a sidebar that contains important such as grammar review sites <www.studyspanish.com>, cultural information <www.realiaproject.org>, current events taking place in the school community <www.dekalb.public.lib.ga.us> and throughout the world <www.bbc.com>, and a link to the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning* <www.actfl.org>. FL teachers might add other appropriate links to engage students and improve instructional strategy.

Our second example, <2009blogsample2.wordpress.com> utilizes the Digg 3 Column template featuring three columns with two sidebars and a customizable header. Instead of using the default image, we chose a picture from our travels in the Mayan world to use as the header. The two sidebars contain a calendar showing the date of the latest post, links to important sites, and the pages we created: Assignments, Conversations, Course Information, Instructors, Oral Assessments, PowerPoint presentations. The pages are also found at the top of the homepage above the image. This blog example is more complex and perhaps more appropriate for a secondary school FL classroom. While the Instructors and Course Information pages are similar to the elementary blog, more advanced blog features are showcased here. For example, on the Oral Assessments the teacher has posted two images, the rubric for the assignment and a digital voice recording. The free version of *WordPress* does not allow users to post audio files, so we uploaded the file to a local server and created a link on the blog to the server. In order to begin the assignment students click on the link to listen to the teacher's prompt and follow the directions.

A second example of blog innovation is the Assignments page, where we linked teacher-created activities. FL teachers can post assignments in different formats, such as Word documents, pdf, and PowerPoint. For example, we used the free *Hot Potatoes* software (http://hotpot.uvic.ca) to create two HTML activities, we saved them on our local server, and then we created links on the blog to the activities. On the final page, Conversations, we posted a topic for discussion between students and the teacher. All comments are moderated by the teacher to ensure task appropriateness before being released for public consumption. Once approved and published on the blog, the conversation begins. Although traditional pencil-and-paper journals can enhance language learning, the interactive and digital platform allows for interaction among multiple users while encouraging communication in the target language. In addition, the blogosphere may reduce the affective filter of students who hesitate to express themselves in class.

Conclusion

No longer is class interaction and social learning limited to the brick and mortar of our classrooms. Through the use of electronic media, interaction can now extend from school to students' daily, digital lives. As discussed earlier, blogs can enrich social interaction among language learning participants. Solidly grounded in social learning theory (Bandura, 1989; Piaget, 1973; Vygotsky, 1978), the use of blogs in an educational context can enhance intellectual development and promote interaction among individuals learning languages. Regardless of technical proficiency, language teachers can enter the digital world of today's language learners by integrating blogs into daily pedagogy. The interactive nature of blogs allows language educator to speak the digital language of our students while sharing the richness and beauty of world languages.

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3

USING BLOGS TO ENHANCE FOREIGN LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION

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Abstract

This article provides suggestions for the content and organization of foreign language course blogs. One French teacher and one Spanish teacher describe how they used their blogs both for course-specific information and for enriching specific units of instruction from high school textbooks. How-to information and practical considerations are discussed, and data from a student attitude survey are provided.

Background

Foreign language (FL) teachers seeking innovative ways to engage their students have formerly relied almost exclusively on the textbook. Those same teachers now have many more materials and tools at their disposal. Textbook companies provide a plethora of ancillary materials; state departments of education and local districts offer professional development and training; and the availability of technology and Internet in schools has enhanced the language-teaching experience. However, as Prensky (2001) points out, there is a generational divide between today's students and most educators. Because of their lifelong immersion in a world of instantaneous connectivity, students of today "think and process information fundamentally differently from their predecessors" (Prensky, 2001, p. 1). He dubs these young people "Digital Natives," while the educators not brought up in the digital age are called "Digital Immigrants." Although educators may be willing to learn the new language, they speak it with an accent.

FL education programs are trying to close the gap between technology-savvy students and their language teachers. A professor of FL education at a major university in the South was interested in exploring how language teachers could become more proficient in the technological domains that their students use

daily with ease. She, therefore, chose blog creation as one of the topics in a Special Topics in Pedagogy graduate course. She was interested in having her graduate students, who were also FL teachers, each develop a blog that would correlate with a specific course and with a unit of instruction from that course. Salaberry (2001) writes, "The success of a technology-driven activity will likely depend as much, or more, on the successful accomplishment of pre- and post-activities than on the technology activity itself" (p. 51). Recognizing the importance of pre- and post-activities, the professor required the teachers to develop specific tasks to accompany links and other postings on their blogs.

This article describes blog design and use from the point of two of the teachers from the graduate course: a French teacher who was a blog novice, and a Spanish teacher who was an experienced blogger. Their blogs are currently hosted at < http:// leblogdeboutier.blogspot.com > and < http://zachary-jones.com/spanish/ >, respectively. Readers of this article are invited to consult these sites to get a more vivid picture of the items being discussed. The French unit was from *Discovering French Blanc* (Valette & Valette, 2004), *Unit 2*, *Le week-end, enfin!* [The weekend, finally] with an Interlude called *An American in Paris*. The unit focused on leisure activities in the city and the country and at the same time introduced the French metro system. The Spanish unit was *El Arte de Chicago* [Chicago's art] from *En Espanol, Level II* (Gahala, Carlin, Heining-Boynton, Otheguy, & Rupert, 2004) focusing on food and art vocabulary as well as irregular verbs in the preterite tense.

Although blogs as teaching tools are relatively new—the first blogs appearing in 1997 (Blood, 2000)—there are a number of articles existing on the use of blogs in classroom instruction. A British blog, *Crooked Timber* (Ferrell, 2003) cited both static and dynamic use of blogs. Static information includes such things as links to the syllabus or to class rules, whereas dynamic information includes items such as class assignments, updated announcements, and student responses and comments. Although static information is of great use to both the teacher and student, it is the dynamic use of the blog that offers the most promise as a pedagogical and a classroom management tool. Students could be required to consult the blog on a daily basis to obtain their assignments. Evidence of their having visited the blog can be verified by simply having students leave their initials or a short message as a comment. Another dynamic use for the blog would be to provide periodic updates to relevant links relating to the thematic units. The teacher would post advice as to which links would be useful in practicing particular vocabulary, grammar, or culture elements. The activities could serve as additional practice material or as test and quiz study guides.

Blogs can be particularly useful in fostering the development of writing and reading skills. Jones and Nuhfer-Halten (2006) describe specific uses of blogs in second language instruction, such as using blogs to encourage and facilitate the writing process and using authentic native speaker-created blogs as class reading material. To encourage writing, the teacher might have students individually post comments to an issue or question placed on the blog by the teacher, or groups of students might collaborate to argue for or against a particular issue. Still

another way to encourage writing would be to have the students author blogs themselves. By virtue of reading the teacher's comments or each other's responses, students will have increased opportunities to work on reading comprehension.

Why Create a Blog?

The question arises as to why one should create a blog when so much material is already available. One reason is that teachers become immediate experts in the minds of their students. Blogs give teachers access to free online publishing and, just as publishing articles in an academic journal may give added credibility to its writers, publishing self-made online activities gives teachers added credibility with their students. One author in this study posits that a self-created and online-published activity is more readily accepted and liked by students, even if it is conceptually the same as an activity from a textbook. Perhaps a characteristic of Digital Natives is that of being more receptive to reading and searching for information online. Studies by Corbeil (2007) and Dubreil, Herron, and Cole (2004) support the notion that students perceive they are learning more when information is presented through an electronic or digital medium as opposed to traditional print or textbook materials. Freedman (2008) claims that computers are motivating because students do not feel judged by them. Students do not feel threatened when they make an error on a computer in the same way they do when corrected by a teacher. Finally, blogs provide an active and around-the-clock means for teachers and students to collaborate in the learning process.

Blogs are efficient way to provide communication between the teacher and students. An activity published online does not require copies to be made; it can be easily modified by the teacher, if necessary; and all students can access it from their own location. Communication via a blog is especially convenient for when students are absent. After beginning to use blogs and online assignments, the Spanish teacher was particularly surprised when students came back to class with their homework already completed from days that they were absent, although not instructed specifically to do so. Even when they had the textbook at home, his students seemed more readily disposed to turn to the class Web site for information. After noticing the students' preference for accessing the Web site, he began to place all class *PowerPoint* presentations online. Students then were sure that if they missed something in class, they could review the slides when they got home. Many students printed them out and placed them in their notebooks for in-class reference. Additionally, the speed of online posting allows for last-minute announcements and information to be provided to students. Timely postings are especially useful when class is canceled or shortened.

Choosing a Blog Host

Although many high school students are familiar with blogging, teachers who are inexperienced in blog use may need some training on blog servers and blog design. To expose her graduate students to blog servers and design, the FL

education professor planned for two sessions in the university Language Acquisition and Resource Center. She arranged for the center's director and guest FL teachers already skilled in instructional technology and blog building to show students how to begin making their blogs. The Spanish teacher, one of the presenters, showed them the numerous resources hosted on his blog, and modeled how to create their own blogs on <www.blogger.com>. Students chose to create their blogs on different blog servers, according to their personal preferences and expertise.

There are several blog servers, each with its own characteristics. *Livejournal* was popular with college students when the Spanish teacher began using blogs in a university FL class in 2005. This blog site allowed each student to maintain an individual blog with posts being aggregated using the "friends" feature. While students liked the ability to receive quick feedback from their peers and teacher, they found that the system was unwieldy because posts were not organized by category. The next semester, he chose another blog-hosting service, <www.wordpress.com>, which allowed for the categorizing of posts and archives as well as multiple authors on one central class blog. Still, this pre-formatted Web site did not meet his advanced needs.

The Spanish teacher, therefore, acquired his own Web space and domain name and installed the freely-available *Wordpress* platform on his own server. Although beyond the ability of the novice user, this switch allowed for increased customization, greater ability to host and stream multi-media files, such as pictures, audio and video, and freedom from reliance on any one service that may or may not be available or supported in the future. Nearly three years later, he still hosts his blog using the *Wordpress* format.

As an inexperienced blogger, the French teacher chose to create her blog using Google's *Blogger* because of its ease of use for the novice. The user need only create a *Gmail* address in order to use this free service. The user can choose from a multitude of appealing layouts and begin creating posts immediately. Although less flexible than *Wordpress*, *Blogger* still offers the ability to create pages containing links to pictures, videos, podcasts, slide shows, newsreels, text, polls, and blogrolls (lists of related blogs).

Information to Include on a Blog

Course-Specific Information

The blog assignment designed by the professor required both course management information as well as unit-specific links. Static course information requirements included (1) the course syllabus, (2) links to professional associations, (3) links to the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century* (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 2006) as well as to the correct level of state curriculum standards, and (4) at least one map of a target culture country. Following the expert's example, the teachers ultimately posted more than the required items for the course blog. For example, the Spanish

teacher added links to research, references, and extra reading. All the teachers in the class thought it indispensable to include a disclaimer in the event that students strayed away from the primary links to others that might be considered inappropriate.

Other static course management links might be to the school handbook, to the school schedule including standardized test dates and vacation days, or to information on tutorials and on how to contact the teacher. The French teacher also used the dynamic aspect of the blog to post announcements about events and contests sponsored by francophone organizations. These included the Clemson Poetry Declamation Contest, the Foreign Language Association of Georgia spoken language contest, the poster contest sponsored by the French consulate, French Immersion Camp, and other academic competitions. This information was updated throughout the year and the posts were deleted as the information became obsolete.

She also motivated students by offering extra-credit assignments to which students would respond with comments or even expand on the assignment parameters. The extra credit assignments worked well, confirming the motivational impetus of blogs. For example, one of these assignments was to answer a series of questions about food and restaurant preferences. Two students not only gave their responses to the questions but also wrote their favorite recipes for two typical dishes.

The Spanish teacher used his blog for homework assignments that he created himself. Students received immediate feedback as to the accuracy of their answers, eliminating similar mistakes on subsequent questions. If students did not understand the grammar points, they could consult the online *PowerPoint* slides, freeing up class time for more communicative-based activities.

Unit-Specific Information

In addition to general course information, blogs are well-suited to help teachers organize and manage each unit of instruction. The teacher can bring together both the material provided by the textbook company, such as links to textbook quizzes, as well as teacher-created supplementary postings. For the blog assignment, the professor required the teachers to have supplemental blog items relating to a specific unit of instruction: (1) pictures or vocabulary, (2) a writing activity with grading rubric, (3) a speaking activity, preferably using online voice-activated protocols such as *Odeo* or *Yackpak*, with grading rubric, and (4) a cultural link with accompanying activity. The items the teachers chose for these categories are listed below along with additional ideas for blog postings.

Pictures and Vocabulary

One of the advantages of the Internet is that teachers have immediate access to a wealth of pictures and clip art that can be used as a picture file, helping to avoid the use of English and target language vocabulary lists. The Spanish

teacher's blog contained a link called *PhotoVocab*, in which he created picture-based flashcards aligned with each unit's vocabulary list. These picture-based flashcards generally contained humorous, strange, and attention-grabbing pictures (obtained through image search engines such as *Google Images*) along with the vocabulary word in Spanish. Students were encouraged to print these out and use them like traditional flashcards.

As an added bonus, these picture flashcards often contained elements of realia and images of cultural products and practices, since many of them were created by searching for the vocabulary word in the target language. For instance, for his *Arte* [art] unit, the Spanish teacher searched *museo* rather than *museum* on *Google Images* and was able to tap into and collect up-to-date, culturally relevant images. The French teacher posted her own gallery of photographs from her travels in Paris to use as an advance organizer. Her high school students were very interested in personal experiences and photographs that included the teacher and her family. The teacher's personalized information served as a nice hook to get the students interested in the unit's culminating project, a tour of Paris. Pictures, especially images selected from target culture Web sites, can also reinforce the national cultural standards.

Writing Assignments

The FL education professor required that the teachers in the graduate class post a writing assignment and grading rubric on the blog. She and the students discussed having some of the writing tasks include peer editing or feedback via blog comments. The Spanish teacher used blogs to create a classroom newspaper. Student groups were assigned a "beat,"—such as entertainment, sports, and news for our local school. Then each week the groups were to produce an article to post online. Other students within the group provided editing suggestions via blog comments before the articles were compiled in an online magazine. For his *Arte* unit the Spanish teacher asked his students to write articles about Chicago, its art, and Frida Kahlo. The French teacher assigned a writing task in which students created mini-Paris tour guides for a hotel. The task consisted of giving a hotel guest subway directions from the hotel to two different Paris tourist sites, then back to the hotel. She used an interactive map on the official *Paris Métro* Web site to introduce this activity. The guide had to contain brief descriptions of the tourist sites as well as visuals. The task description and rubric were posted on the blog.

Speaking Assignments and Voice Activated Protocols

The FL education professor was particularly interested in having the teachers try Internet voice recording protocols via such tools as *Odeo*, *Audacity,* or *Yackpack* and encouraged them to design an oral assessment task using one of these sites. The two teachers had varying success with this project. The Spanish teacher used *Yackpack* to record one side of a simulated phone conversation, in

the style of the Interpersonal Speaking section on the AP Spanish Language Exam. To support this art unit, the simulated conversation involved scheduling with a friend to see a Latin American art exhibit coming to town. Students used *Yackpack* to record online personalized responses to the prompt and pleased the teacher with the variety of their responses. Many students commented that they enjoyed this particular activity, and at an open house parents also commented that they thought this activity was particularly practical and novel. The French teacher created a speaking activity wherein students imagined themselves hosting a French-speaking exchange student. They were asked to describe where they went and what they did with the exchange student over the weekend in their own home town. Students who had microphones at home successfully recorded their responses on *Odeo*. However, the French teacher had a problem retrieving the *Odeo* recordings on her *Blogger* site, so she allowed all students to redo this activity in the language lab. The lesson here is for the teacher to be flexible and to verify the blog host's audio capacity ahead of time.

Cultural Activities

Blogs provide limitless opportunities for teaching culture. For the Paris unit, French Web sites provided information on Parisian restaurants, including some of the most well-known and culturally significant such as *Café de Flore*. Students were asked to make a virtual visit of one of the restaurants and write a review, describing what they had for each course, how they enjoyed it, and how much it cost. Extension activities might include composing a menu, role-play, or sharing a dish with the class and describing how it was prepared. In preparation for the Paris tour project, the students accessed links to the Paris metro and to authentic sites providing information on the major monuments. These sites as well as follow up discussion and activities enabled the French students to become aware of cultural products and practices and to compare Paris to their own city.

The Spanish teacher added a link to his *Arte* unit called *Art Galleries*. By scouring target language and museum Web sites, he collected images of famous pieces of art and organized them in an online gallery. While many artists were available for general reference, during this unit students were instructed to view the works of Frida Kahlo in particular. These art galleries aided them in completing a project related to the unit in which students illustrated their own story about Frida Kahlo. In addition to the art galleries, the Spanish teacher made some of the works into online puzzles that students could piece together online, giving students added exposure to these important cultural products.

The Spanish teacher used the dynamic aspect of the blog to create and publish *Actualidades* [current events], a daily online magazine for his intermediate Spanish students. He encouraged his students to use the magazine by posting the following comment, "Reading and commenting on the *Actualidades* articles are a fun way to keep your Spanish up-to-date, or 'actual' like we would say in Spanish" (Jones, 2008). This blog link provided activities related to recent cultural events, such as new movies, songs, music videos, celebrity gossip, or interesting

news items related to Latin America and Spain. The teacher gave his opinion on an item and invited students to do the same in the *Comments* section of the class blog. Also included at the end of each post was a list of five words or expressions related to the topic. At the end of each week, he compiled these new words into an online quiz for students to test how much they have learned by reading the blog that week. Even after the semester ended, the teacher noticed that students continued to visit the site and leave comments.

Maps

The French teacher posted a map of the Paris metro that students used when completing their project on Paris. There was also an interactive map located at <http://flagspot. net/flags/fr.html> that allowed students to click on a particular region of France, opening a link with pictures and a detailed description of the region. Each region had links to specific tourist destinations. The Spanish teacher posted a map of Chicago that allowed his students to locate the Art Institute of Chicago as well as nearby sights and neighborhoods. A map of Mexico provided context for the art of Frida Kahlo.

PowerPoints

Both teachers make extensive use of *PowerPoint* presentations. The French teacher created a separate page for each textbook *Leçon* [lesson] with links to all the grammar *PowerPoints* supplied by McDougall Littell as part of the ancillary teaching materials. The Spanish teacher created many *PowerPoints* relating to the use of the preterite of irregular verbs that he used in class and posted on his Web site so that students could review and print at home. Students often commented that they experienced less anxiety when these *PowerPoints* were placed online because they were less worried that they would miss something in class. The posting of *PowerPoints* also facilitated end-of-semester review because students could easily find and read presentations from earlier in the semester.

Videos

For the French blog, among the unit-related videos was a music video of the song *Champs Elysées* by Joe Dassin that shows high school age-students visiting various monuments in Paris. This video served as a visual introduction to the city and helped students visualize the monuments they had to describe in their end of unit project, a one-day tour of Paris monuments using the metro. Students learned the lyrics to the song by completing a cloze activity. Another music video featured the song *All You Need is Love* by the Beatles was set in the courtyard of the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris. Students were asked to comment on why this museum was so controversial when it was built in the 1970s.

Many cultural videos, including the ones listed above, can be found on sites like <www.youtube.com> or <www.dailymotion.com>. A keyword such as

Paris or *Jacques Brel* can be entered in the search field, and these sites will list any related videos. Links on these sites allow the video to be posted automatically to a blog along with accompanying text from the teacher. Another interesting use of videos is to have the students listen to two versions of the same song and vote on their preference. The French teacher posted two versions of *Ne Me Quitte Pas* [Don't Leave Me] by Jacques Brel. One version from 1956, in black-and-white, pictured the artist performing his original work, and the second featured Yuri Buenaventura playing a salsa version of the song. Students registered their votes by posting a comment and stating, in French, why they preferred that version. Two students came to class requesting that other French music videos they had seen while browsing be posted on the blog, even providing the URL to the teacher.

The Spanish teacher made extensive use of music videos both in class and with links placed on the Web site. The videos, freely available through <es.yahoo.com> and numerous other sites, were often the feature to which students responded most favorably. The teacher searched the Internet for lyrics, corrected the orthographic errors that may be present in Internet lyric sites, and then placed them in a *Word* document. He created cloze activities by removing key words, placed them in a work bank, and had the students view the video several times, filling in the missing words. The song lyrics served as reinforcement for the irregular preterite, one of the main grammar points treated in his *Arte* unit. For this unit he chose Jennifer Lopez's *¿Qué Hiciste?* [What Did You Do] and Camila's *Todo Cambió* [Everything Changed], both of which contain many irregular preterites. Because students watched and listened to these videos multiple times, the lyrics and visuals from the videos quickly became commonly shared classroom cultural references. Often during the course of a semester these memes will reappear in different contexts. Students would often quote or reference the videos to remind themselves and their classmates of certain language topics. For instance, if a student forgot the preterite of *hacer* [to do], fellow students would say things like, "Remember that Jennifer López song that we listened to—*¿Qué Hiciste?* [What Did You Do]" and the student would respond, "Ah...yes, *hiciste* [did you do]." We conjecture that these cultural references are key to personalizing and internalizing language fragments.

In addition to using the lyrics to provide vivid examples of language use, the videos themselves contain visuals of additional cultural products and practices. For instance, Juanes' *A Dios Le Pido* [I Ask God] shows images of bullets as he sings of his desire for peace in Colombia. Juan Luis Guerra's *Ojalá Que Llueva Café* [I Wish It Would Rain Coffee] shows images of the Dominican countryside with typical homes and activities. These visuals serve as further basis for culture-rich classroom discussion.

Music

In addition to the music videos, the Spanish teacher regularly placed links to music in the form of streaming audio. Streaming audio, particularly of recent singles, is freely available on many artists' official Web sites. Music is obviously a powerful motivator for many students of this age group. The Spanish

students indicated that this feature of his Web site, along with follow-up cloze activities similar to those mentioned in the section for music videos, was often one of their favorites. Students from previous school years often mention in passing that they are still listening to certain songs introduced to them in class and on the Web site, thereby meeting the Lifelong Learning National Standard, 5.2 (National Standards for Foreign Language Learning Project).

Student Reaction to the Blogs

While the French teacher did not conduct an actual survey, she did ask her students to comment on her blog. Students who used the blog regularly responded very positively. Students expressed that it was "*très chouette*" [very cool] and offered their own ideas as to what additional music and videos they would like to see on the blog. Others wrote recipes and recommended restaurants.

At the end of the semester, the Spanish teacher conducted an anonymous survey to gauge frequency of student use of the various features on the blog. Forty-one students responded to the survey. The first section of the survey listed the 10 major sections on the Web site (Online Homework, Class Resources, PhotoVocab, Art Galleries, Movie Posters, Music Player, Crosswords, Art Puzzles, Extra Reading, and Reference) and asked "How often have you used the following features of the Web site throughout the previous semester?" The students could indicate if they used the blog features often, sometimes, or never. The second portion was an open-ended question asking for comments about the blog. The following table shows the number of student responses to each of the survey categories.

Number of Student Responses to Blog Use Survey

Activity	Often	Sometimes	Never
Online Homework	31	8	2
Class Resources	7	26	8
Photo Vocabulary	4	25	12
Art Galleries	2	27	12
Movies Posters	0	19	22
Music Player	19	10	12
Crosswords	15	23	3
Art Puzzles	7	24	10
Extra Reading	2	11	28
Reference	13	15	13

The responses show that the Spanish students most frequently used the online homework followed by the music player and the crossword puzzles. The least frequently used item was the extra reading followed by the movie posters. A high number of students indicated that they sometimes used the class resources, art galleries, PhotoVocab and art puzzles; the students' use of the reference section of the blog was evenly distributed among the response possibilities. That the students ranked the online homework as the feature they used most frequently provides evidence of how blogs can support the language curriculum by providing practice opportunities outside of class. An interesting follow-up study would be to compare student homework completion when assigned online versus written homework.

The high use of the music player was not surprising considering the popularity of music players, such as iPods and mp3 players, with teens in general. The written comments confirmed that the students liked the music feature of the blog, as it was the second most frequently mentioned feature. Several comments were, "I loved the music player. I used it every day at home," and "My favorite part was listening to music while doing my homework." The use of the music feature at home demonstrated that students were meeting national standards related to cultural products and language use outside of the classroom.

For the blog features that did not receive high use, the Spanish teacher decided that it would be beneficial to use more class time to draw direct attention to these areas. An impressive finding of the comments section is that the most frequent comment was that the blog was helpful or useful, with 9 out of 41 students mentioning this aspect of the blog. Students stated, "Thanks for making an easier way for us to accomplish our work," "I love your blog. It really helps me out," and "The blog is useful to review for tests."

Other students liked the culturally rich material and the fact that when they posted a comment on the blog they got a quick response from the teacher. Students also made some suggestions for improving the blog. They suggested posting a calendar, games, and even more grammar. Most important for teachers, however, may be the positive attitude students had toward the blog. These final comments confirm the students' positive reactions, " Sr. Jones, your blog is amazing," and "I thought it was really cool." It would seem that a teacher blog is an effective way to really connect with today's net-savvy students.

Practical Considerations

While the use of teacher-created blogs and Web sites to support thematic units certainly has many benefits, there are a number of practical considerations to keep in mind, including teacher familiarity with technology, student accessibility to technology, and school system approval of technology. First, for blogs and Web sites to be integrated into instruction, teachers must know how to create and use them. General knowledge and familiarity with Internet resources and video/audio software also are beneficial, but not all teachers have access to training in these areas. Recognizing this need, the FL education profes-

sor incorporated blog design in her graduate course, and her language education program recently added a technology-specific course, FL Educators and Technology, to both its undergraduate and graduate program selections. The course is now required for all teacher candidates in FLs who are seeking certification at her university.

Second, not all students have equal access to technology, particularly outside of school. To address this situation, at the beginning of the semester, the Spanish teacher sent home an addendum to the class syllabus, informing parents that online resources would be used extensively in the course and that students would be required to access them regularly. After the teacher outlined the benefits of these new resources, such as their interactive nature, parents were given the option of having their children turn in alternative paper assignments. Most parents, perhaps because of the wide availability of technology in this specific community, chose to support the online assignments. Those few students who chose paper alternate assignments were contacted and asked if they would support the online assignments if time could be allotted for students to complete the assignments using the in-class computers. Nearly all parents then supported their use. The French teacher also encountered some problems with access. For the speaking assignment that used the *Odeo* Web site, she had to make modifications for those students who did not have microphones on their home computers, allowing them to record their segments in the language lab.

Third, and perhaps most problematic, is school system approval or disapproval of certain types of technology use in classrooms. Technology policy varies by district, but the use of Internet content-filters on school computers sometimes results in a complete blocking of personally-created blogs, forums, and Web sites. Many districts may block easily set-up, freely available site-creation tools on the Internet such as <www.blogger.com>. After the Spanish teacher experienced negative response from local information technology departments at unblocking individual teacher blogs on these large Web sites, he acquired his own Web space and domain to host his own Web site. Then, as Web master, he classified his Web site as educational with the Internet filter provider, thereby making it freely accessible at school. He could then preview all postings for appropriate content before they are made available to his students. This option, however, may not be practical with many teachers, since it requires considerable technological expertise, money, and time that the free sites do not.

Even though the French teacher also received positive feedback from parents and students, she felt that she could not require all students to use the blog because it was not readily accessible from in-school computers. Since her district limited blog use, she came to the conclusion that her blog would be used in the following ways: (1) as a motivational tool to provide students with opportunities for extra credit if they completed enrichment activities; (2) as a support for projects and in-class assignments such as the ability of students to print out extra copies of instructions, rubrics, class syllabus, etc., (3) as a resource for extra practice activities, grammar explanations, and vocabulary. She hopes that in the future her district will change its policy so she can make full use of blog applications that she learned in her graduate course.

Changing district policies is a daunting task, but as the use of blogs and Web sites becomes more common, perhaps districts will provide approved ways for teachers to use these technology tools that so appeal to students. Some districts have begun to host teacher blogs internally, allowing them to set guidelines and to moderate blog content. Dissemination of up-to-date information about the educational benefits of blog use to administrators and to local information technology departments may help change policy in the future.

Conclusion

Students, at least in the Spanish teacher's case, are enthusiastic about the course blogs and access them for both course support and for personal enjoyment. During the graduate course the teachers, through collaboration with other teachers more experienced with blogs and with direction from the professor, learned how to create blogs and how to organize them around course-specific and unit-specific postings. The reaction to the blog assignment was very positive overall, with several graduate teachers stating that they would never have created their blogs on their own and that they are using their blogs regularly in their own classes now. The French teacher and novice blogger continued to use her blog throughout the year and is still using it to organize her units.

It is hoped that this article will encourage teachers who consider themselves "Digital Immigrants" to try out blogs in their own classrooms and will give those teachers familiar with blogs some additional ideas for their postings. Foreign language teachers need to reach out to their students on their own turf which, more and more, is on the Internet. Blogs can pique students' interest and enrich foreign language instruction by reaching students beyond the walls of the classroom.

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4

The SCOLT Assessment Project: Working Smarter Not Harder

Greg Duncan
INTERPREP

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SCOLT Executive Director

Abstract

It is mid-July in one of the hottest locations of the southeastern United States. Forty teachers have shown up, some willingly and others under pressure, to participate in five days of professional development and with the requirement that they must create products by the end of the experience. This scenario was the backdrop in which foreign language teachers from Richmond County in Augusta, Georgia, began their journey to learn about performance-based assessment. What happened over the course of those five July days in 2007 was nothing less than remarkable. This article describes that experience.

Background

As part of its outreach to the region it represents and serves, the Southern Conference on Language Teaching (SCOLT) seeks to promote the professional growth of its membership. Following SCOLT's participation in the April 2005 *Assessment Summit* sponsored by New Visions in Action, the Board of Directors announced a grant for professional development on the topic of assessment. Competition for the grant was open to any district in the region that agreed to

- provide a district-level person (foreign language coordinator or official assigned to the foreign language program) to work directly with SCOLT and its project consultant in pre and post planning as well as on-site training;
- provide a training location of sufficient size to accommodate foreign language teachers involved in the training and provide computer access;
- guarantee that a standards-based curriculum was in place and accessed by the foreign language personnel;
- provide teacher compensation consistent with district policy for training during non-school time;
- provide professional development credit equal to the time teachers spent in training (50 hours);
- guarantee that the majority of foreign language teachers from each school in the district would participate in all phases of the training; and
- guarantee that results would be shared at the 2009 SCOLT Conference in Atlanta and with other appropriate entities.

In return, SCOLT agreed to cover travel expenses and an honorarium for an outside consultant to facilitate the work with the district's teachers and to pay for supplies and expenses associated with workshop materials. The selected district paid the costs of teacher training stipends and honoraria.

SCOLT contracted with Greg Duncan, former language teacher and administrator, state department of language education specialist, and independent language consultant, to lead the project. Duncan has years of experience working with schools, districts, colleges and universities, and other educational agencies to improve foreign language teaching and learning at state, national, and international levels, particularly on issues of performance-based assessment.

The Process

Four school districts submitted applications for the Assessment Project grant, and ultimately Richmond County, Georgia, was selected. The actual work of the project took place in four stages between July 2007 and May 2008: (1) instruction and development (July 2007), (2) field-testing of tasks and rubrics (August 2007-January 2008), (3) reporting of field-testing and revision of tasks and rubrics (February 2008), and (4) reflection and future planning (May 2008).

Instruction and Development

Most of the Richmond County K-12 world language teachers began the initial training in July. Excluded were those teachers yet to be hired and teachers engaged in other projects or studying or travelling abroad. The background knowledge of the teachers proved not to be vastly different from foreign language teachers in other settings. There were teachers who knew a great deal about performance assessment, some who knew nothing, and a majority who had some knowledge but admitted to gaping holes. Accordingly, instruction was conceived to offer something of value to all participants and a common core of information from which teachers could begin to grow as individuals and as a district.

Approximately half the meeting time in July was dedicated to the instructional component. Instruction continued throughout the school year as the individual participant knowledge base deepened. As topics covered in instruction came to life in the context of task and rubric development, subsequent discussions ensued. Background instruction for the teachers centered around three topics that the consultant deemed important to the creation of high-quality performance assessment tasks: common characteristics that all high-quality performance assessments contain, understanding of Novice and Intermediate levels of proficiency, and characteristics of exemplary rubrics.

After the initial input stage, teachers tried their hand at developing performance tasks that they would then be able to use with their students during the coming school year. Although this component of the project required much hard work, teachers were energized and eager to tackle their assignment. The performance tasks would be made available on the district intranet, giving teachers access to more than 40 tasks that they could adapt and use throughout the course

of the year. Teachers immediately saw the utility of these assessments, and this high utilitarian value helped inspire teachers to create the tasks.

Development of Tasks

At the suggestion of the facilitator, teachers chose to follow a common format in creating their tasks. This uniform template insured that important elements were addressed, and the uniformity would provide familiarity when teachers looked at tasks that they themselves had not created. After the tasks were developed, a multilevel vetting process was used to assess items. Teachers were asked to review their tasks critically and to set aside typical southern politeness in order to offer honest, forthright, and efficient feedback to their colleagues about how the tasks and rubrics could be made better. Teachers then began a four-step vetting process. All tasks and rubrics were reviewed by a colleague, revisions were made based on feedback, tasks and rubrics were vetted by the larger community of colleagues, and additional revisions were made based on the feedback from the larger group.

Guiding questions related to task and rubric quality helped frame the vetting process and provided direction for discussion. Tasks were deemed of high quality if they reflected the probable proficiency level of the student, contained a real-life context, were interesting, were written in inviting language, were crystal clear in their directions, and followed a logical flow of ideas. In their reviews, teachers asked whether the rubrics reflected the proficiency level of the students, were clear, communicated the expectations, set forth gradations of quality, and communicated to the students how to get a better grade.

The participants described the vetting process to be the most valuable component of the experience. It sparked lively discussion and allowed teachers to become a community of learners. Teachers also commented that they applied the knowledge they have gained to negotiate their own understanding of that knowledge to clarify and discuss issues with their colleagues. The synergy that was created was palpable. The quality of tasks grew better, colleagues deepened their knowledge and experience bases, and friendships were both renewed and forged.

At the outset of the initial five-day experience, the expectation was that each of the approximately 35 participants would create a single task, resulting in the creation of 35 tasks. However, teachers were so energized by this experience that they posted 66 tasks to share with their colleagues. This feat spurred the district to appoint one of the teachers to work with those few teachers unable to attend the July session and to prepare them for the next round of activities.

Field-Testing Tasks and Rubrics

Even the best planning cannot take into account the inevitable unknowns that accompany any new venture. For that reason, the facilitator required that there be a period for field-testing of tasks and rubrics during which teachers could test and refine their creations. Sometime before mid-January 2008, the Richmond

County teachers were to use the task and rubric with their students. They were then asked to come to the February 2008 two-day meeting prepared to describe students' reactions to and performance on the task. They were to keep track of any problems that occurred and what changes needed to be made to the task, the rubric, or the process of administering the task.

For teachers who routinely used performance-based assessments with their students, the field test provided an opportunity to try out a new assessment and to add it to their growing repertoire. But for more traditional teachers who generally relied on paper and pencil testing, the field test offered them and their students an opportunity to try a different form of assessment—one that focused on what students were able to do rather than what they knew or did not know.

During this period of testing, the benefits of performance-based assessment became clear. Teachers learned that good assessments can motivate students and instill energy and creativity in student work. For many teachers the terms motivate, energy, creativity were not terms they associated with assessment of any kind. The field test gave the doubtful teachers among the group the chance to see for themselves how students might respond to an assessment that did not look like a traditional type of test.

Reporting of Field-Tests

Participants gathered for two days in February 2008 to discuss the results of the field-test experience and to make final revisions to their tasks and rubrics prior to uploading them to their Web site for others to use. For many of the group, the February meeting was their first opportunity to see some of their colleagues since the summer 2007 training. Naturally, there was much to talk about. The challenges that were identified outweighed the successes but only in number—not in importance, and many teachers shared what worked best for them in handling some of the challenges. Teachers reported that some students were reluctant to try new skills or work with partners. There was also mention of grading subjectivity, classroom management issues related to class size, and the need for students to take responsibility for their learning. Among the successes, teachers reported that students liked the activities, which meant they tried harder, were more enthusiastic and more motivated, and that grades were higher. The teachers clearly felt that the movement toward performance assessment was a better fit with Georgia's new performance standards and with the general direction of national foreign language standards. The field-test was proof that students could be inspired and motivated by assessment as long as it assessed something they saw as meaningful. Even the challenges that were identified were helpful and provided a sense of direction regarding where there next work needed to take place.

Reflection and Future Planning

At the completion of the SCOLT Assessment Project in February 2008, Richmond County teachers had a better understanding of the project. The work

continued for several months and contributions were made the district bank of tasks. In May 2008, a smaller group was invited back for two days to reflect on the value of this project for the district, to discuss the logical next steps for the program, and to prepare to present their findings at the upcoming SCOLT 2009 conference. The participants charged with reflecting on this experience for their colleagues recognized that tremendous growth and empowerment were by-products of the assessment project. Collectively, they created a rich bank of performance-based assessment tasks directly tied to the Georgia's new performance standards. These items were available not only to assess students but also to also inspire them. The project served as a springboard for discussions that continue at this writing to explore logical and feasible next steps for this Georgia school district.

Postscript

The Georgia Department of Education (GDOE) recognized the potential of the SCOLT project to serve as assessment exemplars of the new Georgia standards. The GDOE located resources to fund a summer 2008 work session and teacher stipends for a small a group of the Richmond County assessment project teachers so that they could refine and edit the bank of assessment tasks and rubrics. These items will be included with and linked to the online version of Georgia's performance standards. This arrangement enables the GDOE to offer examples of carefully vetted tasks. Additionally, the items will be accessible on the Web at http://www.georgiastandards.org/language.aspx>> and on the SCOLT Web site <www.SCOLT.org>, thereby spreading the influence of the good work of the Richmond County teachers and the SCOLT collaborative to a worldwide audience.

Appendix

The following sources are provided for further information on performance assessments and rubrics.

Books and Articles

American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. (1998). *ACTFL performance guidelines for K-12 learners.* Yonkers, NY: American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages.

Archer, J., & McTighe, J. (2001). *Scoring rubrics in the classroom: Using performance criteria for assessing and improving student performance*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

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Marzano, R., Pickering, D., & McTighe, J. (1993). *Assessing student outcomes: Performance assessment using the dimensions of learning model*. Alex andria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Tedrick, D. (Ed.). (2002). *Proficiency-oriented language instruction and assessment: A curriculum handbook for teachers.* Minneapolis, MN: Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition.

Wiggins, G. (1998*). Educative assessment: Designing assessments to inform and improve student performance.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Rubric Web Sites

Rubistar (4Teachers: *ALTEC at the University of Kansas)* http://rubistar.4teachers.org/index.php

How to create a rubric from scratch (Chicago Public Schools) http://intranet.cps.k12.il.us/Assessments/Ideas_and_Rubrics/Create_ Rubric/create_rubric.html

Checklists to support project based learning and evaluation (4Teachers: *ALTEC at the University of Kansas)* http://pblchecklist.4teachers.org/

Creating rubrics (TeacherVision®) http://www.teachervision.fen.com/teaching-methods-and-management/rubrics/4521.html

Creating a rubric for a given task (Edtech: San Diego Unified School District) http://projects.edtech.sandi.net/staffdev/tpss99/rubrics/rubrics.html

Rubric converter (Web site was developed by Canadian educator Callum Makkai) http://roobrix.com/

Rubrics generator (TeAch-nology - The Art and Science of Teaching with Technology®) http://www.teach-nology.com/web_tools/rubrics/

World Languages Specific Web Sites

Consortium for Assessing Performance Standards—CAPS (A New Jersey FLAP Grant Project) developed assessment tasks called Thematically Organized Assessments – TOAs http://flenj.org/CAPS/?page=parent

Minnesota Language Proficiency Assessments (MLPA) Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA) http://www.carla.umn.edu/assessment/MLPA.html

Performance Assessments for Language Students (PALS—Fairfax, VA school district) http://www.fcps.edu/DIS/OHSICS/forlang/PALS/

Virtual Assessment Center (VAC) Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA) http://www.carla.umn.edu/assessment/vac/

Sample Task and Rubric

Level II, French

Targeted Elements   [Interpersonal Mode]

- MLII.IP1D   Give descriptions.
- MLII.IP1D   Demonstrate Novice-Mid to Novice-High proficiency in oral and written presentations with respect to proper pronunciation, intonation, and writing mechanics.

Description of Task

You are part of an exchange group that is traveling in France for the summer. You and your friends are walking along Rue Mouffetard in Paris when you witness an automobile accident between a red Peugeot and a black Renault. The driver of the Renault jumps out of the car and runs away. Since your friends are assisting the injured driver of the Peugeot, you are the only one to see him get away. When the police arrive, an officer asks you questions in order to get a description of the driver. He/she might ask you about questions about such things as:

- Gender;
- Height;
- Approximate Age;
- Hair Color;
- Description of the driver's clothing;
- The direction in which the driver fled.

Teacher Notes

This activity is intended to be a paired oral activity. It can, however, be utilized as a written activity, particularly for level 1, but a rubric for grading written activities will need to be substituted for the rubric used below as well.

Novice-Mid Interpersonal Rubric

	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Does Not Meet Expectations
Is the student understood? (Comprehensibility)	The student is understood without difficulty.	The student is understood with occasional difficulty.	The student is understood only with much difficulty.
Does the student understand? (Comprehension)	The student understands without difficulty.	The student understands but sometimes needs repetition or re-statement.	The student does not understand most of the time.
How well does the student use the language? (Vocabulary Use & Language Control)	The student uses simple sentences that may contain occasional errors but they do not hamper communication. The student attempts to create with language. The student recognizes and uses appropriate vocabulary with ease.	The student uses mostly words, phrases and an occasional sentence. Errors may be present but do not hamper communication. The student recognizes and mostly uses appropriate vocabulary.	The student communicates mostly at the word level. Errors interfere with communication. The student has difficulty recognizing and using appropriate vocabulary.
How well can the student keep the conversation going? (Communication Strategies)	The student can creatively express confusion and/or the need for repetition or clarification.	The student uses memorized chunks of language to: -Ask for repetition - State lack of understanding.	The student cannot keep the conversation.

5

PREPARING STUDENTS FOR THE TEACHER LICENSURE EXAM: IT'S MORE THAN JUST THE CONTENT

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Abstract

Licensure exams have become one of the most important factors in teacher certification. Test-takers often are presented with obstacles as they attempt to pass the licensure exam, such as discrepancies between test format and best practices in the classroom, lack of sufficient practice for productive skills sections of the exam, and ignorance of test-taking strategies. This article addresses ways to overcome these obstacles and proven strategies to enhance performance on licensure exams. In addition, the article addresses the need for the entire profession to become involved in the preparation of students for licensure exams, including guidance in locating resources and encouraging study abroad.

Purpose

In the current climate of assessment and accountability of teacher preparation, teacher licensure exams have become highly significant, and in many cases they are the sole determinant of certification. The foreign language profession, through tools such as the *American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages* (ACTFL) *Proficiency Guidelines* (ACTFL,1986) and the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning* (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 1999) has relied on a common scale for measuring student progress in acquiring a second language and developed a set of best practices for the classroom. However, some licensure exams currently in use diverge considerably from the best practices of the proficiency-oriented foreign language program. Frequently the test questions and tasks are above the language proficiency levels which students have been able to develop by their senior year in college. Even if test-

making companies are in the process of making changes that match best practices in the classroom, these changes do not come rapidly. In the interim, making changes at the upper-division level in French, German, and Spanish programs, promoting study abroad, and preparing students to take their licensure exams are remedies for the anxiety and repeated failures our teacher candidates frequently experience. As a pragmatic way to enhance student performance on the licensure exam, this article offers proven strategies on test taking and environmental preparation, which are included in the Appendix to this article. We recommend that teacher educators, language educators, and students familiarize themselves both with the licensure exam required in their state and the way the exam is administered. Both education and language faculty must also address ways that curriculum, upper-division courses, and course delivery can increase proficiency to the Advanced Low level of ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines. Having both the foreign language faculty and the education faculty work together toward these goals is crucial. In addition, institutions and advisors must actively be involved in promoting study abroad programs in which students can achieve proficiency gains more quickly than in a classroom setting on their home campus.

Review of Literature

Recently, there has been much concern in the foreign language teaching profession on establishing a teacher identity based on reflective looks at a candidate's own learning experiences and on developing awareness of how others learn and receive knowledge in the classroom (Antonek, McCormick, & Donato, 1997). Hedgcock (2002) argues for an expansion of the reflective approach to include mastery of second language skills at an appropriate level and knowledge of best practices in pedagogy. Licensure exams now are the final step toward certification, but the material and skills tested on these exams are not always explicitly related to the content and activities of courses required in language education programs. Rarely is there a specific course that prepares candidates for their licensure exam.

Most research that examines teacher licensure exams focuses on general aspects of exams for all teacher candidates. One example is the report to the Montana State Board of Education on the suitability of using the Praxis II series of content exams as replacements for the National Teacher Examination equivalents (Rose, 1994). Other reports have examined the Praxis I and II Exams as predictors of teacher success (Blue, O'Grady, Toro, & Newell, 2002), the validity of Praxis II cut-scores (Nweke & Hall, 1999), and the content of Praxis II Exams (Mitchell & Barth, 1999). Wilkerson, Schomber, and Sandarg (2004) compared the scores required for licensure and issues of licensure reciprocity in different states in the service area of the Southern Conference on Language Teaching (SCOLT).

Qualitative approaches are also important tools in pre-service teacher preparation. A recent study by McAlpine and Dhounau (2007) focuses on program review in order to prepare their students for teaching. Foreign language faculty and pedagogy faculty should be well versed in the *Standards* and work

together to change curricula and to ensure a culture of oral proficiency. ACTFL in conjunction with the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) offers guidance for both language and methodology faculty in the content standards in the ACTFL/NCATE Program Standards for the Preparation of Foreign Language Teachers. Changes in teacher training programs in foreign languages require close cooperation between the foreign language faculty and the pedagogy faculty, a cooperation which can take time to develop. One of the biggest challenges is the education of language faculty, who may need assistance from education faculty to integrate the *Standards* into their teaching. McAlpine and Dhounau (2007) give excellent advice on how to build an exceptional program and to enhance the possibilities that students who complete such a program pass the licensure exam.

Glisan (2006) identifies five unique features of the *ACTFL/NCATE Program Standards* that describe expectations of teacher candidates. These new expectations have opened dialogues between education and foreign language faculty to collaborate to redesign teacher programs. However, our profession faces many challenges. Glisan notes that one such challenge is ensuring that teacher licensure exams reflect the program expectations. Colville-Hall, Fonseca-Greber and Cavour (2007) discuss three institutions' focus on aligning curriculum and outcomes with the *ACTFL/NCATE Program Standards*. Although the study outlines major program reform and emphasizes the importance of collaboration between education and foreign language faculty, it does not address alignment between teacher preparation programs and licensure exams.

As can be seen from the review of literature, the licensure exam is an important but unexamined area of teacher preparation. Little is known about the degree of correlation between success on the foreign language licensure exam and the quality of programs intended to prepare teacher candidates. The licensing examination is rarely mentioned in the mix of concerns about content knowledge, pedagogical tools, and reflective practices; and yet tales abound of teacher candidates who complete programs of study only to be thwarted in their final step by the licensing examination. A student enrolled in a study abroad program with one of the authors completed three six-week study programs in Spain, maintained a high grade point average, and yet completed student teaching was repeatedly denied certification because she missed the licensing exam cut-off score by one point on three separate occasions. On the other hand, many states will waive academic and professional credentials if an individual can pass the licensure exam. This dichotomy had led many in the profession to decry the use of the licensing exam as the final criterion in licensure and to demand that states take more responsibility in how they use exams for matters of certification (Pedersen, García Gómez, Angelini, and Frei, 2003).

Analysis of Licensure Exams

We now turn to the content of the licensure exams. In the next section, we examine the lack of connection between components of licensing exams and best

practices of foreign language skills testing, and we recommend curricular and classroom realignments to compensate for these shortcomings. Finally, we suggest programmatic enhancements to support the development of the productive skills, and we append a check-list for students to help them prepare for licensing exams.

Most exams currently in use consist of one or more of the following parts: listening comprehension, grammatical structures, reading comprehension, and cultural knowledge. Separate formats in speaking and writing, which may or may not include the parts identified previously, target productive skills. See the Appendix for more suggestions to help develop these skills.

Listening Comprehension

The listening comprehension component of licensing exams typically includes conversations and narrations. With long narrations and extended conversations followed by a series of questions, normal memory load can be taxed. We know of no rationale for evaluating listening comprehension in this format, nor can we think of a communicative situation that parallels long conversation or narration activity. Although test-takers may jot down notes as they listen to passages during the exam as they do during classroom lectures, classroom note-taking aids serve to recall information in the lecture and are not intended for immediate feedback or answers to multiple-choice questions. This testing format is not common to pre-professional teachers as they acquire proficiency.

Although most listening portions of exams have introductory lines by a narrator, there is minimal contextual information to provide a frame of reference for the passage. As a result test takers have few normal global cues that communicative listening comprehension exercises typically provide. In real-life conversations, sounds and not just words serve as cues to orient listeners. For example, a public address announcement in a railroad station is accompanied by the sound of trains going by and people chattering in the waiting area. Without clues to the setting in the context of the conversation, listeners have no idea what details of the conversation they have to hold in memory in order to answer upcoming test questions. While listeners search for the appropriate context, they can miss the content. Since native speakers of English "use primarily semantic cues (i.e., information provided by the context) to process aural texts" (Berne, 2004), the absence of such a context in the licensure exam makes it both difficult and unnatural for students to respond as normal listeners.

In some testing situations, questions are not printed in the test booklet, so students have no information to guide them as they listen to short conversations. For students who have been trained to listen for selected information, this procedure can be confusing, since it varies from typical communicative testing procedure in the classroom. On some exams, there is more than one question following a listening passage. By the time students hear a second or third question, they may not recall the details of the passage. This format tests memory more than listening skills. Other listening comprehension tasks require test-takers to

provide information that is either very specific, very diffused, or both. Such tasks are not common in classroom listening comprehension activities.

In order for students to perform well on listening tasks described above, they need to practice with and exposure to passages with minimal context, a change from today's best practices. In her 2004 review of literature on listening comprehension strategies, Berne cites studies that indicate that listeners at all levels of proficiency use the same strategies and tactics but in different ways and combinations. Therefore, college faculty must assist students in upper-division classes with strategies to make them more successful in listening, particularly students who will take licensure exams that test listening in decontextualized passages. Another excellent way to improve listening skills is through a study abroad experience prior to or during the junior year. Students report that conversations during meals with a host family often challenge their listening skills because of limited contextual and background information and the absence of visual cues.

Grammatical Structures

Although we would prefer that structure be tested in ways that focus on authentic situations in authentic contexts, it is standard practice for licensure exams to utilize multiple-choice format. Most licensure exams evaluate and test a range of structural items. However, some exams currently in use feature components of error analysis. This type of testing produces a divergence between current best practices in proficiency-oriented language learning and the types of questions asked of test takers. Although today's teachers must be able to identify and correct errors, they place a higher priority on communicating meaning. They know that accuracy is enhanced as students develop proficiency. Since error correction is not emphasized in the classroom as a part of communicative language learning, it is not appropriate to suggest classroom activities that feature error correction.

Reading Comprehension

Many reading comprehension passages on licensure exams are taken from literary works, thereby confusing students about the objectives of the reading portion of the test. For example, some students have told the authors that their licensure test contained a section on literature. Their comments suggest that they do not realize that their reading skills, not familiarity with literature, were being tested. In fact, during test preparation workshops students were overheard to advise future test-takers to memorize famous authors, their respective works and genres, and their countries of origin. This misperception about the licensure exam may also be attributed to the fact that the study of literary texts remains at the core of most foreign language major programs (Leeman & Rabin, 2007).

Frequently, reading selections in licensure exams lack normal contextual clues readers are accustomed to, such as a title, background information, visual images, or sources. In order to prepare students for reading comprehension, professors need to expose juniors and seniors to decontextualized texts of varying

lengths and sources. Texts might include magazines and newspapers, in addition to literary excerpts so that students focus on reading comprehension and not only literary analysis or interpretation. Students should practice paraphrasing the reading selections in both speaking and writing in order to make reading comprehension a regular part of class activities.

Cultural Knowledge

Culture is a slippery term to define. Students tell the authors that they spend more time preparing for the culture portion of licensure exams because of the expanse of information from which questions are drawn. While contemporary best practices encourage teaching the interrelated nature of cultural products, practices, and perspectives, licensure exams currently in use test culture by focusing on isolated components of fine arts, literature, daily life, customs, special celebrations, values, attitudes, history and geography. Testing in this random nature appears to trivialize the place of culture in the undergraduate program of study. Although the authors agree that cultural proficiency should be assessed, they argue that test-takers need guidance on expected breadth and depth of cultural knowledge. For example, the typical undergraduate Spanish program requires only one or two classes in culture and literature. It is unreasonable to expect that undergraduate Spanish majors receive equal preparation in the cultures of all parts of the Spanish-speaking world, including the Hispanic presence in the United States, encompassing over 20 countries and 2 millennia. However, until licensure exams are aligned with best practices, we recommend that foreign language departments provide students with a template of important cultural categories for students to research, and curriculum committees should require the inclusion of specific cultural items in all upper-division classes. For example, random questions about cultural topics included on the licensure exam can be incorporated into classroom activities.

Productive Skills: Speaking and Writing

Most productive skills portions of licensure tests currently in use are communicative and consistent with best classroom practices in developing proficiency in foreign languages. Activities that require picture description, role-playing, giving directions, or telling stories are communicative in nature and allow students ample opportunities to demonstrate speaking proficiency. However, in some cases, the evaluative criteria used, the level of production required, and the testing environment limit students' chances for success on the licensure exam. For example, test-takers may be asked to defend an opinion, a task which requires that they perform not at Advanced Low proficiency, as ACTFL recommends for beginning teachers, but at the Superior level. Although in time and with experience future foreign language teachers should reach the ACTFL Superior level, few will be able to achieve this level of proficiency by the beginning of their senior year when they typically take their licensing exam.

On writing sections of licensure exams, students may be asked to write letters or compositions based on pictures. These types of tasks are communicatively based and commonly practiced in the classroom. Classroom activities which may assist in preparation could include creative writing of poems or stories, writing reports based on surveys, written interviews, or writing letters to a literary or historical figure.

Upper-division content courses need to be aligned with the ACTFL program standards for Advanced Low (Pearson, Fonseca-Greber, & Foell, 2006). Such alignment would call for more student discussion and group activities in upper-division literature and culture courses. The instructional format needs to allow substantial contributions from students (Pearson, Fonseca-Greber, & Foell, 2006). For example, after a study of the Americas, students could debate the events of 1492 from either a Spanish or indigenous perspective; and in a literature course, they could write and perform a scene from a literary text they are studying.

Classroom changes in focus of courses and activities are important in helping the student to achieve the Advanced Low proficiency level, but there is no better concentration of elements to build productive skills than participation in a study abroad program.

Study Abroad

Prior to the last 10 years, the benefits of study abroad were acknowledged to be largely anecdotal. Recently, however, various kinds of empirical data have been collected, and funding agencies have been more supportive of study abroad proposals given research supported by hard data (Hulstrand, 2006). The Executive Summary of the 2002 American Council on Education points out the need for skills in foreign languages and cultural literacy and supports foreign language education. On November 10, 2005, a U. S. Senate resolution sponsored by Richard Durbin and Lamar Alexander designated the year 2006 as the "Year of Study Abroad" (Murphy, 2006). In the same year, ACTFL spearheaded a national movement to showcase foreign languages and study abroad, and the Commission on the Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Fellowship Program issued a report which called for a five-fold increase in study abroad over the next decade (Dessoff, 2006; Murphy, 2006). Other legislation followed, as President Bush launched the 2006 National Security Language Initiative with funding to increase the number of Americans who learn critically-needed foreign languages, and the Senator Paul Simon Study Abroad Foundation Act, with a goal of sending one million U. S. students annually to study abroad, was introduced into both chambers of Congress in 2007. According to the *Open Doors 2007* report, there has been an increase of 8.5% in the number of students studying abroad.

Across the country, colleges and universities have made study abroad a priority and included it in their globalization goals. There are few better means to accelerate the development of language skills and enhance cultural knowledge than study abroad. Unfortunately, studying abroad has long been perceived as somewhat of a privilege for the elite or for those who could afford it, and there

remains the belief among some foreign language professionals that foreign language skills are best developed on campus within a highly formalized structure. In the last decade, hard data show that study abroad improves language skills and cultural awareness. Research also outlines what can reasonably be expected from different kinds of study abroad programs and how to take advantage of public and private sources of financial support for study abroad. The authors believe that faculty and advisors should emphasize the benefits of study abroad as an essential component of helping teacher candidates increase their confidence and their linguistic and cultural proficiency prior to taking the licensure exam.

Classroom activities that enhance the development of productive skills are necessarily limited to the time of enrollment of students. To reach the Advanced level of proficiency requires additional time and practice. Therefore, professionals need to place more emphasis on study abroad as the best means to hone these skills. As we extol the virtues of studying abroad, we must coach, encourage, facilitate, and even entice students into taking the steps to apply and participate in these off-campus programs.

Although the junior-year abroad has long been considered the minimum stay for achieving greater proficiency and cultural sensitivity, semester-long programs (Magnan & Back, 2007), summer programs, and short-term immersion are also beneficial to students. Short-term programs enhance cultural awareness (Lewis & Niesenbaum, 2005), help students discover mechanisms for coping with cultural differences, and positively affect student's linguistic awareness (Zamastil-Vondrova, 2005). Although these shorter experiences do not result in the same levels of proficiency benefits as longer programs, they often motivate students to return for longer exposure in-country for which they will ultimately receive the proficiency benefits. Students who participate in long-term programs will receive the additional benefits of being able to integrate socially with natives (Zamastil-Vondrova, 2005). This social interaction with native speakers is an important component in developing oral proficiency, primarily because these types of exchanges are unpredictable and call for a greater level of creativity. Kennedy and Reese (2007) point out that educational activities related to social interaction challenge students simultaneously to process what they hear and to create with the language.

One of the many benefits of study abroad is increased self-confidence on the part of the student in using the language, partly because of student success in confronting unfamiliar communicative situations. Students with study abroad experience should be able to apply this self-confidence in testing situations with unfamiliar communicative tasks. Cooper (2004) surveyed 341 foreign language teachers in Georgia regarding their level of satisfaction with their preparation for teaching. Many teachers supported a requirement for study abroad as part of teacher training, stating that study abroad coupled with more language courses to develop language skills would improve their proficiency in the languages which they now teach.

Study Abroad as Teacher Preparation

What kind of gains in productive skills and cultural awareness can we expect for students who participate in studies abroad? Hulstrand (2006) found that students gain greater proficiency if they are paired with a host country national, whether the pairing is in a home, a student apartment, or in a campus dormitory. Alpert (2008) found that study abroad also enhanced teaching skills in reading, writing, listening, and speaking among preservice and in-service foreign language teachers. Additionally, informants reported feeling more confident and credible as teachers, commenting that they were able to teach culture and customs more effectively by relying upon their first-hand experiences and realia.

A study abroad experience is crucial to help teacher candidates achieve the Advanced Low rating required to meet the ACTFL program standards (Pearson, Fonseca-Greber, & Foell, 2006). Advisors need to be aware that prior coursework in the foreign language may improve language gain during study abroad (Magnan & Back, 2007). Advisors should begin helping students choose a study abroad program beginning with their freshman year (Oxford, 2008), as the level of oral proficiency required for classroom teachers is acquired through time and practice.

Conclusion

The licensure exam for teacher certification is a key part of the movement for assessment and accountability in teacher training programs in foreign languages, but teacher candidates have found that the exam itself has become an obstacle to their certification. Given the critical shortage of foreign language teachers, we must offer strategies to help candidates pass licensure exams in their current forms even as we wait for revisions. Knowledge of content is not sufficient; test-takers must also be familiar with the format of the exam they will take and any environmental factors that might affect their performance. Foreign language educators and their teacher education counterparts must work together to make sure that foreign language teacher candidates are properly prepared to take and pass the licensure exam.

Just as foreign language and pedagogy faculty are designing and developing teacher preparation programs based on the new standards, the profession must take deliberate steps to prepare our future teachers to pass their licensing exams. Because the licensure exams are often the primary criterion for certification, teacher educators, language professors, and students must be aware of how the exams are structured, the range of material being tested, and any gaps between best practices in the classroom and test formats. An active push to get more students involved in study abroad will improve proficiency levels of the students, thereby enhancing chances that teacher candidates will pass their licensing exams. Teachers and students must be proficient not only in the content of the licensure exam, but also in test-taking strategies and testing procedures.

Increased cooperation between foreign language professors and teacher educators can make a considerable difference in encouraging students to participate in study abroad. Research should be used by foreign language professionals to convince students of the need to study abroad to enhance their oral proficiency for the licensure exam and to underscore the value of study abroad in preparation for their careers as teachers (Alpert, 2007).

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Appendix

The process of preparing students for licensure exams must begin early and involve professionals in both foreign languages and education. Students need clear and complete information regarding content knowledge and proficiency skills required on the exam, as well professional advice regarding their readiness to take the exam. Our experience working with pre- and in-service teachers leads us to believe that test takers benefit from discussion of specific test-taking strategies, and in the next sections we offer advice generated during discussion with test-takers.

Testing Conditions

1. Call the testing center and ask the following questions.
    a. Will the exam be administered in a language laboratory with individual headsets and booths?
    b. What types of technology will be used to administer the listening and speaking portions of the exam?
    c. Will multiple test-takers be examined and recorded in the same room at the same time?
    d. Will signs be posted to direct test-takers to the test site?
    e. What time will the test administrators arrive on site?
2. If multiple test-takers will be examined and make recordings in the same room at the same time, practice ahead of time to prepare for the level of noise and distraction you are likely to encounter under these conditions. Be aware that head sets do not cancel out all extraneous noises.
3. When you receive your confirmation and test site assignment, check to see if there are instructions for re-testing in event of a personal emergency, cancellation, or general problems during the test administration. If there are no such instructions, call the testing company to inquire about the re-testing policy.

General Readiness Prior to Registering for the Test

1. Complete advanced-level courses in grammar, composition, and conversation before taking the test.
2. Consult the study guide for your licensing exam. Familiarize yourself both with the format of the test and the scoring criteria.
3. Study and prepare for each section of the test before you register for the test. Be aware of the objectives, format, and scoring criteria of each section.
4. Prepare to demonstrate skills equivalent to ACTFL's Advanced Low to Superior levels of proficiency by speaking and writing on unfamiliar topics, stating and defending an opinion, and hypothesizing. Before registering for the test, ask a professor or colleague for an honest assessment of your proficiency in each skill.

5. Familiarize yourself with strategies for taking standardized American tests and multiple-choice tests. Know how to eliminate possible wrong answers and when to guess. This is especially important for test takers from other countries who may be unaccustomed to practices common in the American testing industry.

6. Rehearse listening to passages and making oral recordings using cassette tapes, headphones, and open microphones while other people are talking simultaneously in different languages in the same testing space.

7. Practice listening to and reading passages taken out of context without normal discourse patterns of repetition, titles, topics, background cues, and shared knowledge.

8. Do not assume that proficiency in a foreign language is sufficient to pass the licensure exam. Often exams require knowledge *about* foreign languages, such as grammatical terminology, names of verb tenses, and familiarity with problems encountered by English speakers. To prepare, test-takers should study old contrastive analysis textbook for examples of typical problem areas in grammar and pronunciation.

9. Many exams test random cultural knowledge across all areas of the world where the foreign language is spoken. Test-takers should review geography, history, art, and literature before taking the exam.

10. Professional language organizations, colleges of education, and state curriculum consultants should offer workshops to assist test-takers with information and testing strategies specific to the licensure exam required in their states.

Environmental Factors

1.Visit the site where you are to be tested. Calculate the amount of time it will take you to drive, park, register, and walk to the testing site.

2. Be aware of accommodations in the area, including parking and parking fees, restaurants, and hotels. If you can afford it, spend the night in the vicinity in order to be rested the day of the test.

3. Limit your intake of caffeine prior to the exam. You may not have a comfort break during or between some portions of the tests.

4. Immediately notify local test administrators if heat, air conditioning, sound levels and laboratory conditions at the testing site are not optimal.

5. Wear a wristwatch with a second hand to pace yourself.

Taking the Test

1. During the test do not allow yourself to become discouraged or worry about a question if you do not know the answer.

2. Be prepared for an unevenly paced test. Several difficult questions may follow a simple question and vice-versa.

3. Remember the scoring criteria for each section. Quantity of language may not be as important as higher-order proficiency skills and accuracy of vocabulary.

4. Pay attention to the number of questions that will follow each passage.

5. When possible, read over the multiple-choice answers before listening to or reading the passages.

6. Pay attention to details as well as the gist of passages.

What Professionals Can Do

1. It is especially important for colleagues in teacher education and in foreign languages to collaborate.

2. Talk with students about their perceptions of the licensure exam.

3. Explain to native speakers why they should familiarize themselves with the testing format and procedures. Remind them that the test directions may be written in English.

4. Attend and offer workshops on the licensing exam to become familiar with its format and scoring criteria in order to provide advice to test-takers.

5. Advise students as early as possible about study abroad opportunities.

6. If possible, college language and education faculty should take the licensure exam to become familiar with its format and content.

6

The Center for Economic Development and Support for Foreign Language
The Keynote Speech at SCOLT's 2008 Conference

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Center for Economic Development

Abstract

The Center for Economic Development (CED) published a report study on education for global leadership focusing on why business leaders are concerned about the lack of international studies and foreign language instruction in our schools and how some in business are responding to the challenges resulting from the lack of skills. The CED report lays out ways to bring about change and the prospects of bipartisan support of these programs.

The CED is a Washington-based public policy organization comprised of over 200 senior corporate executives from some of the nation's largest companies and some university presidents. CED's roots are traced to the 1940s when a group of CEOs came together to help the nation make an orderly transition from a wartime to a peace -time economy. One of CED's first policy studies became the blueprint for the Marshall plan. CED's business leaders form subcommittees or task forces around various domestic and foreign policy issues and provide a much needed business perspective. Our recommendations often reflect what is good for society and the overall economy, not just simply what is good for business. CED trustees were the first business leaders to get involved actively with education reform. Some of you might remember two CED trustees, Brad Butler, CEO of Proctor & Gamble, and Jim Renier, CEO of Honeywell and father of the Success by Six Movement. Under the banner of the CED, both of these men were pioneers in connecting business to the education reform movement.

CED has a history of being ahead of the curve when it comes to representing emerging views of corporate leaders. For several decades CED has provided a business voice for education reform and has developed recommendations that call for reform of our nation's school system in order to prepare today's children to become tomorrow's educated workforce. As we begin the 21st century, technological, economic, political, and social forces have created a new era. Technological advancements and lower trade barriers have paved the way for the globalization of

markets, bringing intense competition to the U.S. economy. The increasing diversity of our workplaces, schools, and communities is changing the face of our society. To confront these challenges to our economy, our education system must be strengthened to increase the foreign language skills and cultural awareness of our students. Our continued global leadership, economic stability, and security depend on our students' abilities to interact with the world community both inside and outside our borders.

Business leaders also realize that in order for corporations to compete internationally they need a workforce that is suited for the new challenges that come with globalization. These overriding concerns led to the 2006 release of a policy study titled *Education for Global Leadership.* This study represents an emerging concern from those in business that students are not adequately prepared for the global workforce because they lack foreign language skills and global competence. The study calls on business and government to adopt policies that increase international studies and foreign language instruction. Since the release of the report, CED has sought to engage business leaders to spearhead programs within their own companies and to support programs that promote increased international knowledge and foreign language skills throughout the education system. When we first released the report, we launched a rigorous endorsement campaign to showcase business support for these sorts of programs. To date, we have secured 75 endorsements from prominent civic and business leaders from throughout the country.

While globalization is pushing us to expand our students' knowledge, the education reform movement, though laudable in its objectives, has led many schools to narrow their curricula. Reforms like *No Child Left Behind* have discouraged schools from teaching students subjects other than reading, science, and math. While there is no question that those subjects are all extremely important, they are merely the foundation and not the sum of a well-rounded education.

There are numerous examples of situations in which businesses not only experienced losses due to insufficient international education and foreign language proficiency, but also experienced building global resentment toward American companies. Take Microsoft Corporation for example. The company developed a time zone map for its Windows 95 operating system that inadvertently showed Kashmir lying outside the boundaries of India. In turn, India banned the new software, forcing Microsoft to recall 200,000 copies of the offending product. Another example was software distributed in Turkey that contained a map that explicitly labeled Kurdistan, which is a crime in Turkey. These conflicts were not obscure, and the offended countries assumed that the American companies were either indifferent to their culture or intentionally offensive.

These types of incidents have led other businesses to take notice of the importance of international education and increased cultural sensitivity. Already we are seeing some businesses step up internal efforts to promote a more internationally literate workforce. As a result of growing from a domestic company to a multinational corporation, Boeing Aircraft Corporation recognized that it needed to develop a more internationally aware staff in order to compete in the global

marketplace. Boeing established a range of international training options for its employees and executives. These programs include a global leadership program, in which executives spend a month abroad improving their business problem-solving skills while immersed in the culture, business, and politics of another country; and a course on globalization for employees interested in advancing their professional development and international skills. Boeing values international knowledge so highly that future promotion is now linked to such knowledge. Douglas Daft, the former chairman and CEO of Coca-Cola, is another good ex-ample. He spent three decades working for Coca-Cola in Asia, and he attributes his ability to lead the company to his time in Asia. He considers an appreciation of other cultures an essential skill for anyone working at Coca-Cola. I might add that since 70% of Coca-Cola's profits come from outside the United States, these types of skills are critical to the functioning of any company with that kind of global reach. We see companies like Proctor and Gamble, IBM, and Intel compensate employees who learn foreign languages for business purposes. CED has also started working closely with business schools across the country, and I've been impressed to see how many of them now have language requirements. However, in spite of these great examples, U.S. business leaders themselves lag far behind their competitors, especially their European peers. The average U.S. business leader knows 1.5 languages, whereas executives from The Netherlands average 3.9. Clearly, we still have a long way to go to be at a level comparable to our global competitors.

In *Education for Global Leadership*, the CED recommends that interna-tional content be taught across the curriculum and at all levels of learning to expand American students' knowledge of other countries and cultures. At the federal level, legislative incentives to design and create model schools with inno-vative approaches to teaching international content can help develop programs that can be replicated in all schools and thereby provide a new generation of students with global learning opportunities. Increased professional development funding will assist teachers in incorporating international perspectives in their classes, and international knowledge can be integrated into each state's K-12 curriculum standards and assessments.

In addition, the current shortage of critical language practitioners has resulted in a backlog of untranslated intelligence, and the increasing need for diplomatic efforts abroad requires a more efficient process for recruiting and hiring critical-language speakers. For these reasons, the CED recommends that the *For-eign Language Assistance Program* (FLAP) under Title V of *No Child Left Behind* to improve or expand foreign language study in elementary and secondary schools, should be expanded and an additional $18 million in funding be provided. The CED also encourages the expansion of the Department of Defense's K-16 pipeline project, a component of the National Security Education Program, to include additional languages with $3 million in funding. Currently, in 2008, one university has a K-16 pipeline project underway providing Chinese language instruction to advanced students while developing a coherent Chinese language sequence for elementary, middle, and high schools.

Efforts now underway in high school reform should require high school graduates to demonstrate proficiency in at least one language in addition to En-

glish and include in-depth knowledge of at least one global issue or the history, culture, or geography of at least one world region. Colleges and universities should internationalize their campuses, by, among other things, devoting more resources to expand study-abroad opportunities. The business community can and should play an important role in internationalizing American education by supporting programs that promote increased international knowledge throughout the education pipeline.

The intelligence failures of September 11, 2001, provided considerable evidence of America's national security institutions' shortage of expertise in key languages and cultures. While those institutions have since sought to increase the amount of foreign language proficient personnel, they have not been able to do so at a pace sufficient to keep up with the demands of the war on terror and the Iraq war. Without the necessary language skills, the national security community cannot effectively locate and monitor the activities of terrorist cells and other violent criminals, nor can we infiltrate terrorist cells.

Republicans, Democrats, and business leaders alike support language instruction as a national security enhancement tool to enhance our understanding of other peoples and cultures. There is a window for bipartisan support that increases funding for foreign language programs as well as international content not only in schools, but also in the Departments of State and Defense and our intelligence agencies. I have testified on this issue before Congress, and I firmly believe there is a nucleus for bipartisan action. We are hopeful that our lawmakers can stand together and do something positive to effect change.

The CED asks business leaders to champion the issues of international studies and foreign language education by articulating reasons why globally literate employees are essential to their success in a global economy. Through partnerships with local schools and universities, business can support international education efforts and even provide more international internships for American students. Keeping America's education system strong requires that we provide our students with the tools they need to communicate and work with their peers overseas and at home.

Finally, I do not want to overstate business enthusiasm for these issues. We still have a long way to go in convincing those in business that these issues are priorities and that they need to provide the muscle needed to create and support these programs at the local, state, and national levels. However, we are encouraged by the emerging realization by some in business that foreign language instruction and cultural content must be a priority within the school systems across the country and that business and government have meaningful roles they can play in supporting these programs.

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Careers and Languages

Lynne McClendon
SCOLT Executive Director

Abstract

In selecting the theme for the 2009 conference, the SCOLT Executive Board wanted to emphasize the need for languages outside traditional career paths and the ways that language professionals can contribute to those careers; thus was born the idea of "Empowerment through Collaboration." The SCOLT Board invited spokespersons from non-profit agencies and business organizations to share information about their need for languages via special collaborative sessions during the conference. This article describes recent collaboration resulting in legislation to empower the language community. It concludes with a series of interviews with individuals whose careers outside the language profession require language skills. The topic of careers and languages is an ongoing SCOLT initiative, and more information is available on the Careers Page *posted at the SCOLT Web site <www.SCOLT.org>.*

Background

In recent years there have been many productive dialogues about the value and need for increasing languages programs for the United States to produce proficient speakers to benefit the economy and enhance national security. This article describes recent legislation and initiatives that focus on the importance of languages and their role in education and careers.

Recent Reports

While language professionals have long known the benefits of language proficiency, support outside the profession has waxed and waned. Recently, however, the importance of languages to national security has been the subject of important legislation and reports. One of the early reports grew out of concern from the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), which produced a *Global Education Policy Statement* (2006). This Council is a nonpartisan, nationwide, nonprofit organization that provides leadership, advocacy, and technical assistance on major educational issues. The members are public officials who head departments of elementary and secondary education at the state level and in the District of Columbia, the Department of Defense Education Activity, and five U.S. extra-state jurisdictions. Among the five challenges CCSSO cites facing the American educational system, numbers two and four address language education:

2. Our current standards and curricula do not adequately emphasize the necessity of mastering world languages, geography, and culture. Strategies addressing this challenge advise reviewing state standards to incorporate world orientation into curricula. In particular, content standards and assessments should be revised to make world languages an essential part of the curriculum for grades 3–12. Increased instruction in languages, geography, and culture will have implications for certification, training, and professional development.

4. Our teachers are not sufficiently supported and trained in 21st-century skills and global content. These strategies emphasize the importance of teacher training in world languages, including requiring pre-service teachers to be not only fluent but trained in the teaching of a world language.

Soon afterward the Council for Economic Development (CED) published *Education for Global Leadership: The Importance of International Studies and Foreign Language Education for U.S. Economic and National Security* (2006). The CED publication made the following recommendations:

- Teaching international content across the curriculum and at all levels of learning to expand American students' knowledge of other countries and cultures.
- Expanding the training pipeline at every level of education to address the paucity of Americans fluent in foreign languages, especially critical, less-commonly taught languages.
- National leaders – political leaders as well as the business and philanthropic communities and the media – should educate the public about the importance of improving education in languages other than English and in international studies.

At the same time, the Committee to Review the Title VI and Fulbright-Hays International Education Programs examined the U.S. government's fostering of language education, both steps taken in the past as well as proposals for the future. In 2007, the Committee published *International Education and Foreign Languages: Keys to Securing America's Future* (O'Connell & Norwood, 2007). In addition to the review of the two federal programs, the report details how the demands for foreign language expertise must be met by reducing shortages in foreign language and area expertise, by producing relevant materials and technology, by addressing business needs, and by increasing support for education, research, and development. The study found that additional resources are needed for an integrated and articulated approach in multiple systems, including K-12 and higher education, because of a lack of knowledge about foreign cultures and languages. The study also recommended that business help address this critical shortage.

Vivien Stewart is Vice President for the Asia Society, a global non-profit organization founded in 1956 to promote strong relationships and understanding among the people, leaders, and institutions of Asia and the United States. This organization seeks enhanced dialogue to generate new ideas across the fields of policy, business, education, arts, and culture. Recently, Stewart discussed the plight of American education (Stewart, 2008), and noted that other countries invest in both language and global skills. With regard to languages, she found that most European countries start a first foreign language in the elementary grades, while in China students learn English beginning in third grade, and in Australia 25% of students learn an Asian language. In the areas of international benchmarking and exchange, Chinese education leaders study educational practices in other countries and encourage teachers to study abroad. Schools are urged to form partnerships with schools in other countries. In the area of technology, South Korea, Singapore, and Taiwan connect their students to the world through high-speed computers. In an era of increasing globalization, the U.S. sent less than 1% of students abroad in 2002, while China and France sent 3%, Ireland sent 16%, and Singapore sent 30%. Stewart also made the case that the keys to global literacy and competency are the abilities to communicate in languages other than English, to work in cross-cultural environments, and to use information from sources around the world. Clearly, there is much for American schools to do.

Recent Legislation

A review of recent federal legislation also suggests that language education is to play a key role in keeping the country strong and economically sound. The need for language proficiency is emphasized in six recent pieces of legislation. Title IX of the Department of Education Organization Act was changed in 2008 to create a new Deputy Assistant Secretary for International and Foreign Language Education. The America COMPETES Act of 2007 provided incentives for the teaching of science, math, technology, and critical foreign languages. The College Cost Reduction Act of 2007 provides TEACH grants of $4000 per year to undergraduate and graduate students who agree to teach foreign languages. The Senator Paul Simon Study Abroad Act of 2007 encourages study abroad for all U.S. college students especially to non-traditional destinations and in the developing world. The National Foreign Language Coordination Act of 2007 called for a new position in the executive branch charged with assessing and addressing language needs. Finally, the National Security Language Initiative of 2006 looked at addressing the nation's need for speakers of foreign languages.

Testimonials: Making the Case for Language Proficiency and Careers

With all of the recent documents, discussions, and national legislative action in support of language study and proficiency in at least one language in addition to English, SCOLT felt the need to obtain feedback from sources outside the profession regarding language proficiency. Armed with these responses, the

recent supportive legislation, and the language-positive documents, language personnel should feel more empowered to share this knowledge with their stake holders in order to move language education forward. Interviews were conducted with several professional who use languages daily in their careers. Each interviewee was asked two questions: (1)What needs do you see in your profession or organization for people to have skills in an language other than English and (2) What advice do you have for language learners. Their responses follow.

James Hoadley
Associate Director
Georgia Tech Center for
International Business Education and Research (CIBER)

The Georgia Tech CIBER enter was created in 1993 and is one of 31 national resource centers of excellence in international business funded by the U.S. Department of Education. It is administratively located in the Georgia Tech College of Management, and it also collaborates with the Ivan Allen College of Liberal Arts. Our mission as a CIBER is to ensure the long-term international economic competitiveness of the United States through support of research, business education initiatives, and corporate outreach activities.

I find that working in a business school, I really work in two worlds—the world of business and the world of academia. In business, the ability to speak languages beyond ones' own native tongue is becoming increasingly important. As Tom Friedman showed us in *The World is Flat*, the barriers to transnational business competition are falling all around us. More and more industries are being subjected to international market forces. As a result, businesses can no longer be run as if they just have to worry about what is going on in their immediate neighborhood. Something is likely happening in another country that will radically change the way any given company does business. It might be a civil war that cuts off critical supplies. It might be the rise of a plucky new competitor who does the same thing that the given company does better, faster, and cheaper. It might be the development of a new product or technology that will put a particular company out of business if it doesn't adjust fast enough. And more of these developments are happening in countries where English is not the native language. Many people, mostly Americans, argue that the common language of business around the world is English. That may be true for now, but if one's competitors and partners speak your language, and you don't speak theirs, you are at a clear disadvantage because they control the flow of information.

Language education is also valuable because learning another language requires learning about the culture of the place or places where that language is spoken. The ability to think in a different way is an incredibly powerful skill that everyone will need to have from now on.

In academia, foreign-born professors and researchers have been around for a long time, while the number of American educators and researchers has been in steady decline. Being able to speak only one language severely restricts how

much information you can access. The amount of valuable research produced in languages other than English is constantly increasing. Being able to understand another language opens up whole new libraries of information to you and greatly increases the number of academics you can partner with.

In response to your second question I believe that language learning is a lifelong process. You may not realize it, but you are constantly learning new words and expressions even in your own language. Any living language will go through steady change. Pick a language or languages to which you can make a lifetime commitment and use them as much as you can. The Internet has made it ridiculously easy to access tons of content in nearly any given language. Take advantage of it.

The best way to learn language is to go where people speak it. Classroom learning is a very useful and valuable tool, but you can probably never develop total fluency in a classroom. Learn all you can in the classroom now, and then as soon as you can, go out and use what you have studied. Language teachers can give you some of the best lessons you will ever take, because if you travel to a land where they speak the language you have studied, you can immediately apply what you have learned. Try going to a country where you have learned the language, then to one where you don't know the language, and see the difference.

Finally, the most important thing to remember when learning anything, but especially a language, is not to be afraid to make mistakes. Most people in the world will be happy that you are trying to speak with them in their language, and they will take it as a sign of respect. If you make some mistakes, smile and keep trying. Nobody was born knowing how to ride a bicycle. Nobody is born knowing a language either. For most of us, we learned our native language at such an early age that we don't remember how much time and effort it took. Learning a second or third language puts us back learning to ride that language bicycle again. You will fall off a few times, and some of your falls might hurt for a little while. The only guarantee is that if you don't get back on and try again, you'll never get anywhere.

Learning another language can be an opportunity to reinvent yourself. Use language learning as a way to get rid of your bad habits, and then start acting in your native language like you do in your second language.

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Ciara Ginyard
Peace Corps

The Peace Corps is a U.S. government agency dedicated to world peace and friendship by providing practical assistance to 74 developing countries. Peace Corps is also committed to promoting a better understanding of Americans abroad and improving how foreign cultures are perceived in communities throughout the United States. Over 185,000 volunteers have served in 139 countries since 1961. Volunteers serve in jobs ranging from education, youth and community development, health and HIV/AIDS, agriculture, environment, business development, and information technology.

In response to your first question, Peace Corps volunteers are more competitive if they have a background in additional language skills. Volunteers serve in more then 70 countries for 2 years of service. Prior to their term of service, volunteers participate in 8 to 12 weeks of training that includes intense language immersion. For service in Francophone Africa, at least 2 years experience of French is required. For service in countries in Central and South America, an intermediate level of Spanish is required, and service is more competitive because of the abundance of Spanish speakers.

In response to your second question, the Peace Corps encourages language learners to at least be able to perform at an intermediate level, rather than to stop as at the beginner level after one or two classes. To participate in cultural activities one must have a three-dimensional strategy in order to inquire in another language.

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<div align="right">**Jorge L Fernández**
Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce (MACOC)</div>

The Economic Development Agency for the Atlanta Metropolitan area is responsible in its Global Commerce strategy for the attraction of foreign direct investment and for assisting local companies to find opportunities in the international market place. We also market our region in our priority global markets.

In response to your first question, I believe that proficiency in another language is an integral part of the development of global talent. As we develop Atlanta as a venue for global commerce, corporations seek talent with global skills, including foreign languages. Atlanta's competitiveness strongly depends on the development of these foreign language skills.

In response to your second question, language learners need to emphasize conversation, culture, and history of the target language. An immersion program in the target language and country should be part of any foreign language training. Learners should integrate the acquired language skills into their core education and skills as they respond to job requirements.

Epilog: As an economic developer, we constantly seek professional business service providers with language capability to link with foreign prospects. Foreign language proficiency adds to the personal value proposition that companies are looking for.

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<div align="right">**Carla Roncoli**
Department of Biological & Agricultural Engineering
University of Georgia</div>

I am an economic anthropologist by training and a research scientist at UGA involved in interdisciplinary research projects on agriculture and natural

resource management. I have worked extensively in Africa and to some degree in South Asia. Most of my work in Africa is in Francophone countries, former French colonies including Mali and Burkina Faso, where all schooling is still in French. Being fluent in French is extremely important to communicate with colleagues and others. In our field research, we use local agricultural extension agents to work as translators between French and local languages, since most of the farmers we work with in the villages have no formal education and do not speak French. I am an Italian national, and I learned French and English respectively in middle and high school. I have become fluent in both by using them in my work.

In response to your first question, it is extremely important to know other languages, given that a lot of our research is conducted overseas and often in countries where people do not speak English. Even though one can hire translators, in doing research one misses a great deal of important information and insight if one is not able to understand what is going on and what people are talking about amongst themselves. It is difficult to build rapport with people if all communication has to happen through a translator. Being tuned in and developing rapport are key aspects of social research.

In response to your second question, it is important that language learners be willing to take chances, make mistakes, feel awkward, and make people laugh. Listen carefully not just to the words, but the intonation, the sounds, and the pauses. Pay attention to the verbal expressions and gestures that accompany speech. Learn the cultural aspects of language as well as the language itself. Take notice of how people communicate in various situations, one-to-one, in groups, and in public situations. Go alone to the field and become immersed in the language. Befriend someone who loves language and use him or her as a coach.

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Gerrit Hoogenboom
Department of Biological & Agricultural Engineering
University of Georgia

In my job I study the impact of weather, climate change and climate variability on agriculture and the environment. As part of my research and outreach activities, I conduct a lot of international travel, mainly to developing countries. I estimate that I have worked in over 25 different countries.

I see a growing need for people with both language skills and cultural skills to work in other countries sharing information about agriculture and the environment. In my office, for example, there are currently researchers and faculty from 15 different countries of origin. The research team is collaborating on projects here in the U.S. and in many different countries. We are focused on research in agriculture, but our areas of expertise include sociology, anthropology, computer programming, statistics, plant pathology, and journalism. Many people on the team speak, read, or write at least two languages in addition to English, although none of us majored in language in college.

My advice is that you don't have to major in a language to use it every day. Don't be afraid to go to a country, even if your language skills are not perfect. You will get better each time you try to use the language. When you go to the country, speak the language as much as you can. When you say even simple phrases like "please" and "thank you" you show people that you respect their culture. Knowing another language includes trying to understand the local culture and being able to work and interact with the local people at their level.

Additional Testimonials

In addition to previous responses, read what international celebrities say about the importance of language proficiency at <http://www.cilt.org.uk/promoting/celeblinguists/celeblinguists.htm>.

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