

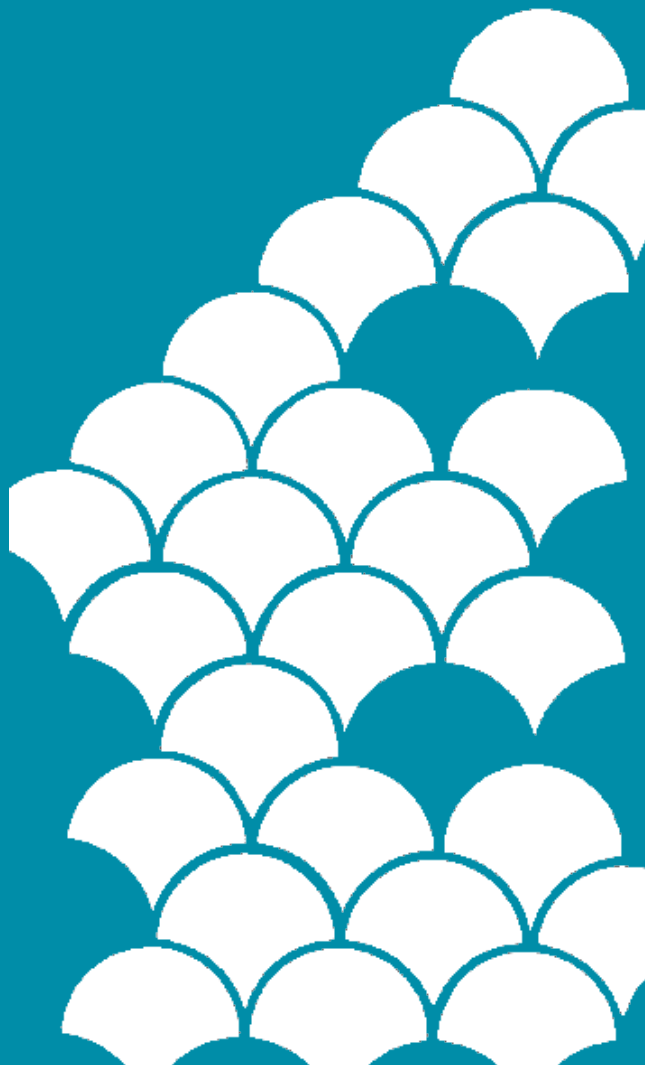
# All Aboard the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Express!

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Tatiana Sildus  
Pittsburg State University (KS)

## Articles by:

Stephanie Dhonau  
Rosalie Cheatham  
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Kirsten Halling  
Sean Hill  
Pascale Abadie  
Carolyn Gascoigne  
Ekaterina Koubek



2011 Report of the  
Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages



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Selected Papers from the 2011  
Central States Conference

**Tatiana Sildus, Editor**  
Pittsburg State University (KS)

2011 Report of the  
Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages

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## **Review and Acceptance Procedures Central States Conference *Report***

The Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages *Report* is a refereed volume of selected papers based on the theme and program of the Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. Abstracts for sessions are first submitted to the Program Chair, who then selects sessions that will be presented at the annual conference. Once the sessions have been selected, presenters are contacted by the editors of the *Report* and invited to submit a manuscript for possible publication in that volume. Copies of the publication guidelines are sent to conference presenters. All submissions are read and evaluated by the editors and four other members of the review board. Reviewers are asked to recommend that the article (1) be published in its current form, (2) be published after specific revisions have been made, or (3) not be published. When all of the reviewers' ratings are received, the editors make all final publishing decisions.

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## Preface

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### All Aboard the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Express!

The 2011 Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, a joint conference with the Indiana Foreign Language Teachers Association, focused on trends, innovations, and national programs that are picking up steam as the first decade of the twenty-first century ends. Sometimes those trends and innovations in the field of education pull us in different directions, or may get us sidetracked. However, several innovations of the first decade of the twenty-first century have the potential to unify world language goals with universal educational goals. The Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills, newly organized pathways in Career and Technical Education, and the adoption of national Common Core standards are just a few such initiatives that are building steam. World language educators must look for our place in these initiatives even though it sometimes feels like jumping on a fast-moving train. If not prepared, we risk being left behind.

In the Keynote Address, Dr. Yong Zhao identified the role of world languages in meeting the challenges and opportunities brought about by globalization and technology. He shared insights from the national dialogue inspired by his criticism of U.S. educational reforms in his book, *Catching Up or Leading the Way*.

More than 165 workshop and session presenters brought information and expertise from across 17 states and across the nation to enlighten conference attendees. Trends and innovations on the themes of assessments, activities and strategies, technology, and the teaching of culture were especially well represented. Fifteen states were represented by “Best of...” presentations. Several presenters returned as “All Stars” from last year’s conference. For the first time we welcomed a presentation by and for American Sign Language teachers. We thank all our presenters for the hours spent preparing for the conference.

Special thanks go to the presenters who took time to elaborate on their topics for this *Report*. It is our sincere hope that readers of this volume will appreciate the research and thoughtful considerations they propose. Together we will set and achieve higher goals for our students and ourselves; to ensure that more passengers will carry bilingual or multilingual credentials to board the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Express.

Phyllis Farrar  
2011 Program Chair



# Introduction

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**Tatiana Sildus**

Pittsburg State University (KS)

The increasingly diverse and interconnected modern world is changing the very notion of teaching. Students today represent the new generation of learners — the Millennial Generation. They are socially active, team-oriented, and driven to achieve. These students are curious about the world and want to be involved in learning. Most notably, the Millennials are the first generation to grow up in the era of digital technology and social networking, and they are often referred to as ‘digital natives’.

Students entering classrooms now will soon be working in a dynamic and competitive global environment. To prepare them for the future, the Partnership for twenty-first century skills, or P21, has developed the Framework for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning, a national document that reflects a vision for ensuring success for all students. The document identifies essential skills within core subject areas. Of particular interest to our profession is the inclusion of world languages as one of the core subjects. To provide direction for language educators, the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills Map for World Languages presents the key objectives across proficiency levels, as well as outlines current teaching trends.

Now more than ever, language educators face the increased responsibility of preparing students to compete in the global society. This volume, entitled *All Aboard the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Express!*, examines the ways of approaching language instruction with the new generation of students in mind and creating more learning opportunities to promote the acquisition of the twenty-first century knowledge and skills.

## **Defining Professional Excellence**

In the opening article, Stephanie Dhonau, Rosalie Cheatham, Alan Lytle, and Dave McAlpine discuss the effectiveness of year-long professional development workshops, created by university professors and supported by the state’s Department of Education for a cohort of K-12 instructors, with the focus on what it means to be an accomplished world language teacher in the twenty-first century. The authors emphasize the value of shared experiences within a community of colleagues and opportunities to analyze and reflect on individual strengths and weaknesses to improve quality of instruction and student performance.

## **Engaging Students in Learning**

This group of articles deals with specific tasks, strategies, and activities that use language in context, increase student engagement, and involve interaction and communication. Marta Antón investigates the nature of student interaction in oral and written collaborative pair tasks. The author describes the types of

discourse and identifies the four types of negotiation that emerge in the process of completing different tasks, including negotiation of meaning, content, task, and form. Chinatsu Sazawa seeks a balance between implicit and explicit grammar teaching and develops an instructional unit by modifying the PACE model. The unit presents a content-rich story within a cultural context and encourages students to use critical thinking skills to create grammar rules and analyze cultural perspectives. The article also provides examples of different electronic storytelling tools to create more sophisticated presentations. The article by Susanne Wagner advocates drama pedagogy for making language learning more personal and enjoyable. The author offers strategies for implementation of dramatic play in introducing and analyzing authentic literature. She outlines the benefits of drama pedagogy for promoting creativity, developing a deeper understanding of the text, and reflecting on complex social and historical topics.

### **Understanding Student Needs**

In this section, Marie Hertzler and Kirsten Halling share the results of surveys administered to high school and college students. The surveys offer insight into the reasons for choosing a language and reveal students' interests, career goals, and desired experiences in the target language. Periodic surveys allow the authors to understand their audience and create a classroom in which content-based instruction becomes highly personalized and meaningful and blends what students should know and what they want to achieve.

### **Building Intercultural Competence**

The next group of articles relates to the topics of increasing global awareness and cultural sensitivity and enhancing intercultural communication skills in and outside the classroom. Sean Hill stresses the importance of student travel and direct exposure to other cultures. The article looks at the ways of making travel more affordable and highlights one of the trips designed by the author as an option to consider. To help their students understand the nuances of culture, Kirsten Halling and Pascale Abadie connect with the new generation of learners through contemporary music and elicit meaningful discussions in authentic contexts. The suggested music selections and activities promote discussion of cultural differences and similarities and universal themes and values.

### **Implementing Alternative Assessments**

The last group of articles reflects a growing interest in assessments that go beyond traditional paper and pencil tests: they involve benchmarks and frameworks, are standards-based, and provide clear expectations and explicit instructions. Carolyn Gascoigne uses the biography component of the Global Language Portfolio and encourages students to reflect upon and assess their own learning, so that instructional decisions can be made to help them meet stated level objectives. Finally, the suggestions outlined by Ekaterina Koubek include the steps involved

in creating performance assessments and developing performance tasks, as well as a variety of relevant electronic tools and internet resources.

The editor is grateful to the authors for sharing their ideas in this volume and to the members of the editorial board for their time and expertise.



# 1

## Twenty-first Century World Languages Standards: A Model for National Board Preparation

Stephanie Dhonau, Rosalie Cheatham, Alan Lytle, Dave McAlpine  
University of Arkansas, Little Rock

### Introduction

As the Cold War ended and globalization became the new buzzword for turn of the twenty-first century vision, world language (WL) teachers were rightfully enthusiastic about prospects for students in the United States to finally see the need for second language competency. Planning for education in the new century began with a significant effort among foreign language professionals to respond to the agenda for enabling Americans to communicate with their global partners in their own language in addition to English. The profession eagerly embraced the national standards movement and created the most salient approach to second language education that has yet been promulgated. Not since grammar translation was replaced by the Audio Lingual method of the late 1950s and early 1960s has the profession's commitment to reform in second language program design been so extensive. *The Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project [NSFLEP], 2006) first published in 1996 were welcomed, if not with "open arms," at least with energy and commitment to focus more clearly on student performance in real world contexts. These student standards were soon followed by the *ACTFL/NCATE Program Standards for the Preparation of Foreign Language Teachers* (2002). Other groups developed relevant standards as well. The *National Educational Technology Standards* (NETS-S) and *Performance Indicators for Students* (International

Society for Technology in Education, 2007) were developed to provide appropriate expectations for students' use of technology to create with language in the new millennium, and *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education* (Association of College and Research Libraries, 2000) assist in defining content and processes for students to be considered information literate. The convergence of a variety of national performance standards for students and teachers could potentially lead to better student outcomes. Naturally WL educators throughout the K-16 continuum were enthusiastic about the likelihood that such sustained attention to standards would soon produce the long awaited growth in second language competency among the nation's students.

However, as the new century moves into its second decade this goal has not been realized. In fact, Robinson, Rivers, & Brecht (2006) found that the national capacity in foreign languages and attitudes toward Languages Other Than English (LOTE) have changed very little in recent decades. They further noted that while 67% of those who learned a second language in a home environment considered themselves to be competent users of the language, only 10% of those who studied the language in a school setting thought they were able to speak the language well or very well. This self-assessment perpetuates the frequent comment of former L2 students that they are unable to communicate with native speakers even though they have studied a L2 for several semesters or years.

Clearly, there is still much work to be done to bring the classroom experience for all second language students to the level of communicative competence that the student standards expect. To make the situation even more challenging, budget cutbacks in education as a result of the recent economic upheaval nationwide have resulted in second language programs in schools and universities being pressured to produce more successful students with fewer resources. Sadly, some programs are being substantially reduced or eliminated entirely with teachers laid off or terminated. This reality is hardly the meteoric rise in American capacity to communicate in a second language in order to be successful in the global society that many WL teachers had anticipated only a generation earlier.

Even as the cutbacks occur, researchers and educators alike continue to seek factors that result in successful students. Competent, motivated, and proficient WL teachers are clearly a significant part of the equation. In such challenging times, a project team of WL faculty at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock offered a series of workshops for area WL teachers in a format designed to meet requirements for professional development. The goal of these day long workshops was to communicate the new world language National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2010a) to workshop participants with the intention of helping this audience acquire the knowledge and dispositions that research on NBPTS has discerned:

- National Board Certification helps change teachers' formative assessment practices (e.g., setting learning goals) and their instruction in general. Even teachers who start at a lower skill level end up with better teaching practices than those who did not go through the certification process (Sato, Wei, & Darling-Hammond, 2008).



- The National Board Certification process improves teachers' professional development by: (a) enhancing reflection on teaching practice, (b) establishing a professional discourse among teachers, (c) raising the standards for teaching performance, and (d) facilitating collaboration (Park, Oliver, Johnson, Graham, & Oppong, 2007).
- National Board Certification is a “transformative experience” for many teachers, and they often apply in the classroom what they learn from the certification process—whether they achieve certification or not. The certification process itself improves teachers' ability to improve student learning (Lustick & Sykes, 2006; Rotberg, Futrell, & Lieberman, 1998).
- A survey of NBCT candidates found that 92 percent reported the process made them better teachers, and 89 percent said it equipped them to create stronger curricula and better evaluate student learning (Yankelovich, 2001) (2010a).

### **Background of the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards**

Three years after the appearance of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983 (The National Commission on Excellence in Education), the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy Task Force on Teaching as a Profession issued a report entitled *A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (1986). Its major recommendation called for the creation of a National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS). The following year, the NBPTS program was born offering to advance the quality of teaching and learning by maintaining high and rigorous standards for what accomplished teachers should KNOW and be able to DO, providing a national voluntary system certifying teachers who meet these standards, and advocating related education reforms and to capitalize on the expertise of National Board Certified Teachers (NBCT).

The National Board Certification process was developed by teachers for teachers to complement already existing state licensing requirements. Advanced standards were established for experienced teachers in 25 certificate areas including two in World Languages (WL), one for Early Adolescence through Young Adulthood and a second for Early and Middle Childhood.

Connected to the creation of these Standards was a process for the production of assessments that focus on teacher work and the complex issues that accomplished teachers face on a daily basis. These assessments include the construction of a portfolio that represents an analysis of a teacher's classroom work and participation in exercises designed to tap the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and professional judgment that distinguish accomplished teacher performance.

The NBPTS for all subject areas are reflected in the five core propositions that form the foundation and frame the rich amalgam of knowledge, skills, dispositions and beliefs that characterize National Board Certified Teachers (NBPTS, 2010b).

**Proposition 1: Teachers are Committed to Students and Their Learning.**

- NBCTs are dedicated to making knowledge accessible to all students. They believe all students can learn.
- They treat students equitably. They recognize the individual differences that distinguish their students from one another and they take account for these differences in their practice.
- NBCTs understand how students develop and learn.
- They respect the cultural and family differences students bring to their classroom.
- They are concerned with their students' self-concept, their motivation and the effects of learning on peer relationships.
- NBCTs are also concerned with the development of character and civic responsibility.

**Proposition 2: Teachers Know the Subjects They Teach and How to Teach Those Subjects to Students.**

- NBCTs have mastery over the subject(s) they teach. They have a deep understanding of the history, structure and real-world applications of the subject.
- They have skill and experience in teaching it, and they are very familiar with the skills gaps and preconceptions students may bring to the subject.
- They are able to use diverse instructional strategies to teach for understanding.

**Proposition 3: Teachers are Responsible for Managing and Monitoring Student Learning.**

- NBCTs deliver effective instruction. They move fluently through a range of instructional techniques, keeping students motivated, engaged and focused.
- They know how to engage students to ensure a disciplined learning environment, and how to organize instruction to meet instructional goals.
- NBCTs know how to assess the progress of individual students as well as the class as a whole.
- They use multiple methods for measuring student growth and understanding, and they can clearly explain student performance to parents.

**Proposition 4: Teachers Think Systematically about Their Practice and Learn from Experience.**

- NBCTs model what it means to be an educated person — they read, they question, they create and they are willing to try new things.
- They are familiar with learning theories and instructional strategies and stay abreast of current issues in American education.
- They critically examine their practice on a regular basis to deepen knowledge, expand their repertoire of skills, and incorporate new findings into their practice.

**Proposition 5: Teachers are Members of Learning Communities.**

- NBCTs collaborate with others to improve student learning.
- They are leaders and actively know how to seek and build partnerships with community groups and businesses.
- They work with other professionals on instructional policy, curriculum development and staff development.
- They can evaluate school progress and the allocation of resources in order to meet state and local education objectives.
- They know how to work collaboratively with parents to engage them productively in the work of the school.

With these Five Core Propositions as the guiding principles, teams of K-12 teachers and university specialists in a foreign language culture and literature were brought together to develop the standards that must be met by teachers seeking National Board Certification (NBC). The original NBPTS were released in 2001 under the title of *World Languages Other than English Standards* and offered 14 standards to the professional foreign language community. The recently released (2010c) second edition is now simply called *World Languages Standards* and offers a reduced, yet thorough set of nine standards as follows:

*Standard I: Knowledge of Students*

*Accomplished teachers of world languages actively acquire knowledge of their students and draw on their understanding of child and adolescent development to foster their students' competencies and interests as individual language learners.*

In this standard, foreign language candidates for NBC should understand the diverse ways that students grow and develop, should form constructive relationships with students and their families, should understand the diverse language and cultural experiences that students bring to the classroom, and acquire knowledge of their students through regular assessment and evaluation. The foreign language educator does all of this to determine the direction, approach, and content of their lessons, to motivate students to learn, and to meet both the common and unique needs of all of their students.

*Standard II: Knowledge of Language*

*Accomplished teachers of world languages function with a high degree of proficiency in the languages they teach. They understand how languages and cultures are intimately linked, understand the linguistic elements of the languages they teach, and draw on this knowledge to set attainable and worthwhile learning goals for their students.*

One of the hallmarks of the NBPTS process is the continuous development and demonstration of the foreign language candidate's personal use of the target language. In this standard, candidates focus on their own interpersonal and

interpretive modes of communication and work to demonstrate an Advanced - Low ability. They also should demonstrate knowledge of how language works including the sound systems, language variations, teaching strategies, and the communicative functions of language. The standard also expects that the accomplished teacher understands the role of interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational modes of communication.

*Standard III: Knowledge of Culture*

*As an integral part of effective instruction in world languages, accomplished teachers know and understand the practices, products, and perspectives of target cultures and understand how languages and cultures are intimately linked.*

Standard III also focuses attention on the accomplished teacher's ability to understand and articulate the 3Ps paradigm of products, practices, and perspectives. This standard, as in Standard II, expects that the candidate keeps abreast of contemporary culture while maintaining the culture's historical significance. Also, as in Standard II, the teacher should be able to integrate culture into instruction so that students understand how language and culture are linked.

*Standard IV: Knowledge of Language Acquisition*

*Accomplished teachers of world languages are familiar with how students acquire proficiency in languages, understand varied methodologies and approaches used in the teaching of languages, and draw upon this knowledge to design instructional strategies appropriate to their instructional goals.*

Standard IV is the third standard devoted to the accomplished teacher's personal knowledge base. In this standard the candidate is expected to demonstrate knowledge of second language acquisition theories and current methodologies in order to provide an input-rich classroom that will enable students to gradually take control of their own language production.

*Standard V: Fair and Equitable Learning Environment*

*Accomplished teachers of world languages demonstrate their commitment to the principles of equity, strength through diversity, and fairness. Teachers welcome diverse learners who represent our multiracial, multilingual, and multiethnic society, and create inclusive, caring, challenging, and stimulating classroom environments in which all students learn actively.*

If one looks at the NBPTS documents from all disciplines, one will notice a common standard across all of them, a standard devoted to the accomplished teacher's demonstration of fair and equitable learning environment or a concern for treating students as individuals while honoring and respecting the differences among students. The equitable treatment is evident in the daily instruction including providing a variety of unbiased assessments. This standard is found in world language classes in group work, cultural studies, service-learning in the community, and the risk-taking activities that encourage language acquisition.

*Standard VI: Designing Curriculum and Planning Instruction*

*Accomplished teachers of world languages design and deliver curriculum and instruction that actively and effectively engage their students in language learning and cultural studies. They use a variety of teaching strategies and appropriate instructional resources to help develop students' proficiency, increase their knowledge, strengthen their understanding, and foster their critical and creative thinking. They work to ensure that the experiences students have from one level to the next are sequential, long-range, and continuous, with the goal that over a period of years students move from simple to sophisticated use of languages.*

Accomplished teachers of world languages believe that language programs should be seamless, sequential, and uninterrupted throughout K-12 instruction. They also believe in the value of both vertical and horizontal articulation as they collaborate with their K-12 colleagues and colleagues in higher education. The Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century (NSFLEP, 2006), Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities are the basis for the planning and instruction of the accomplished teacher. The candidate deliberately designs instruction for what the students should KNOW and be able to DO. The NBPTS candidate understands the value of using authentic materials and knows that technology may be the source for accessing realia.

*Standard VII: Assessment*

*Accomplished teachers of world languages employ a variety of assessment strategies appropriate to the curriculum and to the learner and use assessment results to shape instruction, to monitor student learning, to assist students in reflecting on their own progress, and to report student progress.*

Understanding students, knowing language acquisition theories and methods that promote them, maintaining one's own language skills and cultural knowledge, and planning and instructing based on the 5Cs of Communication, Cultures, Comparisons, Connections, and Communities naturally lead to assessments that inform both the teacher and the student. The accomplished teacher understands that assessment is a continuous process of intervention, review, and evaluation using both formative and summative evaluations, appropriate rubrics, and a variety of assessment types.

*Standard VIII: Reflection*

*Accomplished teachers of world languages continually analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of their instruction in order to strengthen their teaching and enhance student learning.*

All teachers realize that no matter how well an activity goes, it can be improved or altered. This standard asks WL candidates to explain both their successes and their setbacks. Part of this reflection is based on recent research in the field, communication with colleagues, and even action research conducted by the accomplished teacher.

*Standard IX: Professionalism*

*Accomplished teachers of world languages collaborate with colleagues and contribute to the improvement of professional teaching and learning communities and to the advancement of knowledge. They advocate both within and beyond the school for the inclusion of all students in articulated programs of instruction that offer opportunities to study multiple languages from early childhood through adolescence and young adulthood.*

Accomplished WL teachers do not just come to school, teach, and go home. They are contributors to the intellectual and professional culture of their school. They put into practice the Connections Standard and actively develop interdisciplinary lessons with colleagues. Beyond their schools, they are leaders in districts as well as in state, regional, and national world languages organizations. Part of their role as a leader is to advocate for the field of world languages to students, parents, administrators, other colleagues, and the community at large. To be this advocate they call upon the knowledge base that they know and demonstrate in the other eight standards previously discussed.

The existence of the NBPTS suggests that there are common standards across a variety of settings. Accomplished teachers in all settings can blend and adapt their knowledge, skills, and dispositions towards teaching with their knowledge of the community in which they teach in order to ensure student learning. Even though there are common standards, there are multiple paths to meeting the standards and accomplished world language teachers can demonstrate not only their own knowledge of language, culture, linguistics, and literatures, but also the skills of planning, teaching, and assessing the field with dispositions that allow for the variety of students that are found in today's world languages classes.

**Why Pursue NBPTS Accomplished Teacher Status?**

As one can surmise from the NBPTS for world languages, the rigor of applying for accomplished teacher status is not to be underestimated. Many may question why they would choose to subject themselves to these rigorous standards with no guarantee of being granted NBC status when not required to do so. As with many other disciplines outside of education, professional licenses often come with the expectation that an individual will continually renew professional knowledge and be active within the discipline beyond the initial training period to maintain good standing within the profession. The world language NBPTS review process is one that raises the professional bar for WL professionals and provides national recognition for members of the teaching profession within the field of world languages. As concern for maintaining and strengthening language programs grows, the professional recognition that an NBC teacher attains is likely to become an increasingly valuable credential.

According to the NBPTS website, only three percent of all teachers nationwide are nationally-board certified (2010a), so for many the pursuit of NBC status is a solitary affair with little local peer support. Attaining world language NBC can be significant for the individual teacher and the school district in which the teacher

instructs. Guiding and aiding current WL teachers through the NBPTS process is beneficial for several reasons : (1) professional development needs, (2) incentives to achieve accomplished NBC teacher status or to recognize the attainment of NBC status, (3) professional and personal accomplishment within the school setting, and (4) professional and personal accomplishment beyond an educational setting.

For most K-12 educators, professional development hours are a requirement for maintaining licensure in the content area. Professional development hours are also a part of the renewal process for world language teacher licensure in many states; however, for many these required hours are not often available in WL professional development workshops and trainings (Dhonau, Cheatham, Lytle, & McAlpine, 2010). Thus, the NBC process offers an exceptional WL professional development opportunity whether or not one achieves NBC status.

A review of several state programs indicates that there is a wide range of incentives for NBC teachers. Many states have signed the 2005-2010 National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC) Interstate Contract that allows the highest level teaching certificate to be awarded for achieving NBC status, as well as the possibility of teaching licensure reciprocity for today's mobile teaching force (NASDTEC, 2005). In some states there are annual pay increases of up to \$5000 in additional compensation per year for 10 years or the duration of the NBC license. Other states confer "master teacher" status on NBCs that may allow some to accelerate their pay grade. Still others count NBC status towards professional development hour requirements for license renewal. Some individual districts provide stipends for application to the process as well as additional dollars beyond the state mandate. Some states provide more modest yearly stipends for achieving accomplished status. Depending on a teacher's state or district, it is clear that there are substantial incentives and funding to reward obtaining NBC status.

The time needed to prepare a dossier for the NBPTS process is extensive. The WL teacher who decides to undertake the process must demonstrate an understanding of planning, teaching, and assessing according to today's WL methodology that must incorporate the national WL student standards. Additionally, candidates must prove their own advanced level WL skills in listening, speaking, reading, writing, and culture. For some experienced teachers who completed their pedagogical training long before the WL student standards were created, demonstrating current methodology in their classes is challenging. Other experienced teachers may find challenges in meeting the requirement of advanced level language proficiency because they don't have regular opportunities to experience the target culture or interact with native speakers. It may, therefore, be necessary for a teacher to engage in additional coursework or study abroad opportunities in order to meet these requirements.

Advantages to teachers for attempting the NBPTS process are evident, however. As a recent report on assessing accomplished teachers discussed, there may be some correlation between having a NBC teacher in the classroom and improved student standardized test scores (Hakel, Koenig, & Elliott, 2008). While this report is as yet tentative and inconclusive and does not investigate world language NBC

teachers' effects on student performance, one could argue that an NBC teacher-led classroom may improve student performance. Another benefit of gaining NBC status is that school districts and administrators can advertise to parents and employers that a certain number of teachers have attained accomplished status. In a time of budget cuts and elimination of some world language programs and positions, it may be helpful for WL teachers to attain National Board Certification because the prestige associated through the rigorously vetted NBC process not only may encourage parents to choose a district for their child's education, but also impress employers seeking to invest in a community, and discourage attempts to eliminate programs and positions in a time of budget crises.

For some, the basic need to fulfill required PD hours may be a reason to pursue NBC; for others financial incentives and personal achievement of the highly-qualified professional credentials may spur interest in pursuing NBC. In some cases, the attainment of the NBC is relevant for improving the likelihood that neither world language programs nor NBC faculty will be eliminated within a district. Even for those teachers who do not achieve NBC status, both they and their students benefit from the high level of expectations required in preparing for NBC, as they bring this improved pedagogical and linguistic knowledge into the classroom.

### **Creating a Community of NBC Scholars**

The goal of the workshops offered to a cohort of WL teachers by the project team as described here was neither to require all participants to complete the portfolio for the NBPTS review process nor to require them to take the required proficiency tests. Rather the goal was to provide, through an on-going professional development series, the opportunity for participants to focus on understanding and embracing the WL profession's most recent effort to articulate what characteristics describe an accomplished WL teacher in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. According to Bransford, Brown, & Cocking (2001), there are several ways in which teachers continue their learning; learner-centered environments, knowledge-centered environments, assessment-centered environments, and in community-centered environments. They write that there are two major themes that stem from studies of teacher collaborations: "the importance of shared experiences and discourse around texts and data about student learning and a necessity for shared decisions (p. 198-199)." The case can be made for learning within a community of colleagues conversant with the nuances of language teaching, sharing world language classroom experiences to become better teachers.

### **Professional Development Workshop Structure**

The project team, four faculty members from the Department of International and Second Language Studies, designed eight six-hour sessions spanning an academic year with a focus on the preparation of NBC. The project was funded from the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) program with pass-through dollars from the state's Department of Higher Education designated to support in-service



professional development through the Teacher Quality Enhancement Initiatives funding of Title II-A.

Using NBPTS' Five Core Propositions and the nine world language NBPTS as a springboard, and to provide a theoretical grounding for the workshops, the team correlated chapters from the fourth edition of the Teacher's Handbook Contextualized Language Instruction (2010) by Shrum and Glisan with the world language NBPTS and the Five Core Propositions as follows:

**Table 1.** World Language NBPTS and Complementary Theoretical Foundation from Teacher's Handbook Contextualized Language Instruction

<b>WL Standard</b>	<b>NBPTS Proposition</b>	<b>Teacher Handbook Chapter</b>
Standard 1	1	Shrum & Glisan, Chapter 4
Standard 2	2	S & G, Chapter 7
Standard 3	2	S & G, Chapter 5
Standard 4	2	S & G, Chapters 1 and 2
Standard 5	1	S & G, Chapter 10
Standard 6	3	S & G, Chapter 3
Standard 7	3	S & G, Chapter 11
Standard 8	4	S & G, Chapter 12
Standard 9	5	S & G, Preliminary Chapter

*Note:* Chapters 6, 8 and 9 of TH were taught in depth in previous workshops.

Each six-hour workshop consisted of a morning and an afternoon session (see Figure 1 for a typical workshop session). The morning session began with an in-depth reading of one or two standards led by a project team member. Discussion focused on the content of the standard(s) and how the potential NBC candidate would be expected to demonstrate competency in the standard(s). Secondly, participants read a correlated chapter from the Shrum and Glisan text using a

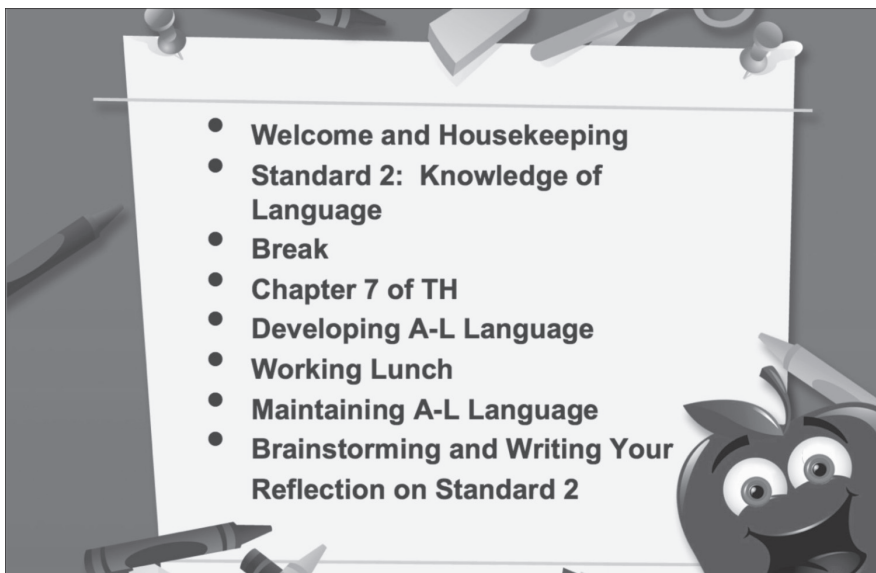
“read one, share one” approach in which each participant had a brief section of the chapter to read and then the responsibility to explain the most salient points of that section to the entire group. Using this approach a lengthy chapter could be “read” by all participants within an hour. During the third hour participants brainstormed how they might be currently meeting the standard(s) in their classroom activities. This communal sharing process allowed participants to acquire suggestions from others in the cohort on strategies and activities they could use to meet the standards or to validate the strategies and activities they were already using.

The afternoon session was spent in the Language Resources Center where participants used technology to reflect on the standard(s) studied during the morning for future use in the development of their narratives for the NBC portfolio. Each session was guided by the following four questions:

- (1) What do I specifically know, and what am I specifically able to do with respect to the Standard?
- (2) How might I demonstrate accomplished practice with respect to the Standard?
- (3) How could I demonstrate to colleagues that I am meeting the Standard?
- (4) How might I demonstrate interaction of two or more Standards in my teaching or school counseling (e.g., planning, managing, or assessing instruction)?

This reflective experience seemed to be the most valuable for the participants as they were required to step back and truly look at themselves as successful teachers and to evaluate themselves against the set of NBPTS standards.

**Figure 1.** Screenshot from one six-hour workshop



Because Standards 2 and 3 require proof of linguistic and cultural knowledge, the leadership team invited four WL university colleagues in French, German, and Spanish to spend three hours on two successive workshop days working with participants on improving their personal capacity for speaking the language and for articulating cultural nuances. Since the NBPTS process requires advanced-low proficiency in speaking, the activities that the language faculty designed were intended to challenge the small group participants to perform at that level and to recognize areas where their oral skills lacked the accuracy needed to demonstrate advanced-low proficiency on the assessments for certification. On the day Standard 3, Knowledge of Culture, was addressed, faculty and participants focused on the ability to demonstrate their knowledge of products, practices, and perspectives.

Since the NBPTS portfolio requires video evidence of a teacher's ability to teach and to interact with students, participants were provided with a Flip™ camera for their use in archiving this evidence using functional and user-friendly technology. With these cameras, participants recorded themselves in their own classrooms teaching lessons and interacting with students, pairs of students, and with the class as a whole for the first video submission. A second video represented their best student interaction. One of the biggest challenges the teachers had was to find an appropriate, unedited 15-minute teacher-focused segment and an appropriate, unedited student-focused segment to offer as evidence in their portfolio. Several of these videos were shared with the entire group, and both team leaders and participants provided constructive feedback. Consequently, participants learned how to improve the technical aspects of creating the videos as well as how to structure the 15-minute segment better in order to maximize their pedagogical knowledge.

In addition to the use of the digital camera, all participants received an 8 GB Flash drive to save their videos and reflections as well as a five-year subscription to the ePortfolio Chalk and Wire (2008) for purposes of editing and archiving their work products leading to the eventual submission of the four required assessments for the NPBTS review process.

### **Reflections and Conclusion**

Proof of the value of this process can be seen in the responses to the summative evaluation held during the last session. Participants responded to a series of questions designed to help them both reflect on their own progress toward meeting the requirements to earn NBC status and to assist the project team in evaluating the project design. One question asked participants to identify the standard for which they felt they were the best prepared and to explain why. Responses to this question varied somewhat with approximately half of the 25 participants indicating that they believed they were best prepared to meet Standard 1: Knowledge of Students. Those who selected this standard mentioned that they worked hard to get to know their students and often had the same students for more than one year, which allowed them to know more about the students' lives outside the classroom. Other participants indicated either Standard 2: Knowledge of Language or Standard 3: Knowledge of Culture as the standards for which they

felt they were best prepared. In several of these instances, however, it should be noted that these participants were either native or heritage speakers or those who had spent a significant amount of time living and working in the target culture.

Another question asked participants to identify the standard for which they felt they were the least prepared. Not surprisingly, several participants indicated that Standard 8: Reflection was where they felt the weakest, not due to a lack of capability to reflect and effect positive changes in their classrooms, rather because of the reality that it is hard to find the time for regular substantive reflection. One participant stated, "I feel the greatest challenges that I have are based in my need to improve my teaching practices in light of these standards. I find that I need to continually read, review and then revise my practices in light of what my students need at that moment." Another commented that she needed to "continue learning, realizing that I will never have it 'down pat' and must learn from the students."

As the project team reviewed the responses it became clear that Standard 8 and the amount of time dedicated in this initiative to writing a reflective piece as a part of the afternoon schedule had benefits beyond those anticipated. Researchers have documented reflection efforts as significant factors in assuring teacher effectiveness. Farrell (2003) suggests that reflection provides the means for teachers to build their daily experiences, allows them to act in a deliberate critical and intentional manner, raises their awareness about teaching, enables deeper understanding, and triggers positive change.

While participants chose different standards when asked to select the standard(s) for which they felt best and least prepared, there was unanimous agreement that the workshop series had benefitted them and their teaching beyond their expectations. "I love this workshop and I look forward to it every month," and "I thoroughly enjoy the workshops and have benefitted immeasurably. Thank you so much for this opportunity. It helps me more than you can know" are only samples of the positive comments participants offered.

Additionally, while not all participants planned to submit a portfolio or to take the required language proficiency exams to earn NBC status, the opportunity to spend eight sessions learning about the specific dispositions and evidence required to demonstrate accomplished teacher status, the time to reflect on what they believe to be their personal teaching strengths and weaknesses, and to consider how these reflections can improve the performance of their students benefitted all participants.

As Glickman and Tamashiro (1982) recognized that teachers who had lower confidence in their teaching effectiveness were less likely to persist in the profession than were those with greater confidence in their teaching effectiveness, it is important to encourage teachers to engage the NBPTS process and to remain current in the profession. This project accomplished that goal. Participants were also able to meet the state 60-hour requirement for professional development, all within the discipline of WL, was an added bonus. If a participant chooses to apply for NBC status, that participant will clearly have benefitted from working with colleagues to understand required NBC expectations prior to working alone on the application; something rare in the profession nationwide.

As Thomas Edison reportedly commented, “The difference between coal and diamonds is that diamonds stayed on the job longer.” Teacher persistence is not a panacea any more than standards for students and NBC status for teachers are. However, the commitment to offer courses and programs that reflect the quality in implementing WL standards can make the difference between teachers who struggle and only last a short time in the profession and those who continue to grow professionally. These accomplished teachers make a substantial impact on their students resulting in a nation no longer “at risk” of terminal monolingualism.

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## 2

# Interaction and Negotiation in Oral vs. Writing Pair Tasks

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### **Abstract**

Recent research on the role of input and interaction among language students in the classroom from interactionist, cognitive, and socio-cultural perspectives has revealed how collaborative tasks may facilitate second language acquisition. The task type and the medium of collaboration (face to face or online) also affect the quality and quantity of the interaction. In this study, collaborative discourse of pairs of beginning-level students of Spanish as they completed the same task orally and in writing will illustrate how task type affects students' focus on different language aspects. The results of analyzing the students' collaborative speech shows that the product of the collaborative task affects how students talk, how much L1 is used in their talk, and what they talk about. Our understanding of group work in relation to task-type has important implications for lesson planning and assessment purposes.

### **Introduction**

For some decades now second and foreign language teaching methodologies based on Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) have suggested that there is a benefit in switching from the traditional teacher-centered class to a more learner-

centered classroom setting. One of the main differences with traditional ways of teaching languages lies in the role of teacher and learner. The communicative approach shifts the focus to the learner in several aspects of classroom instruction: the curriculum reflects the needs of the learner, activities engage learners in communication (involving information sharing and negotiation of meaning), and the teacher's role is to be facilitator of the communication process (Nunan, 1989).

CLT advocates having students work in small groups in order to maximize their opportunities for communicative practice. The role of the learner is that of a communicator: students interact with others, they are actively engaged in negotiation of meaning, they have an opportunity to express themselves by sharing ideas and opinions and they are more responsible for their own learning. These changes in classroom practice aim at providing opportunities for learners to develop functional proficiency in the target language. The ability to use the language appropriately for specific functions in real social settings encompasses much more than possessing knowledge of the formal properties of the language. It is also necessary to be aware of and apply sociolinguistic and discursive rules, as well as strategic competence in comprehending and communicating in the language (Canale & Swain 1980, ACTFL 1996). Today's language learners must be prepared to interact with others around the world. Language teachers need to provide learners with opportunities to develop functional skills in the classroom. If we are to equip students with the minimum functional proficiency that is required in the workplace and in the global community of the 21st century, we must have a deep understanding of the classroom tasks that are most beneficial to the development of particular language skills. This study explores the effect of the product of pair tasks on the quantity and quality of negotiation in the learners' collaborative talk while completing the task.

### **Interaction in the L2 classroom**

Interaction, participation, and negotiation create learning opportunities in the L2 classroom (Van Lier, 1991). The microanalysis of classroom discourse allows us to witness how language is used as a mediation tool in the learning process (Brooks & Donato, 1994; Donato, 1994; Kowal & Swain, 1994).

The interactionist position in SLA research maintains that negotiation of meaning, when learners are engaged in communicative activities, is crucial for L2 acquisition. This position is influenced by Krashen's comprehensible input hypothesis, which claims that input which is comprehensible to the learner triggers language acquisition (Krashen, 1982; Krashen & Terrell, 1983). Early research on negotiation in the language classroom focused on negotiation of meaning and how negotiation makes input comprehensible in learner-learner (Gass & Varonis, 1985; Long & Porter, 1985; Pica, 1987; Porter, 1986; Varonis & Gass, 1985) and teacher-learner interaction (Chaudron, 1986; Ellis, 1985; Long & Sato, 1983; Pica, 1991; Pica & Doughty, 1985; Pica & Doughty, 1988; Pica & Long, 1986; Rulon & McCreary, 1986; Wong Fillmore, 1985).

Some researchers point out that comprehensible input alone is not enough to produce language acquisition and that there is a need for SLA research to focus



on output and other aspects of classroom interaction (Swain, 1985). Swain (1997) claims that, besides enhancing fluency, output serves other functions such as raising consciousness about linguistic forms, testing learners' hypothesis about language, and leading learners to reflect about language.

Research on form-focused instruction has shown that learners' engagement in communicative tasks in the classroom leads not only to negotiation of the meaning of the message, but also to the negotiation of form (Doughty & Williams, 1998; Lightbown & Spada, 1990; Pica, 1994; Swain & Lapkin 2001), with learners focusing on how to express accurate messages. Spada (1997, p.73) describes form-focused instruction as a "pedagogical effort which is used to draw the learners' attention to language form either implicitly or explicitly." Research on negotiation of form, whether between teacher and learner or in pair work, suggests that focus on form has a positive effect on language acquisition (Long, 1996; Nobuyoshi & Ellis, 1993; Lyster & Ranta, 1997). This conclusion is also reached by research on collaborative interaction conducted from a Vygotskian perspective, which shows how learners working in collaborative tasks negotiate message and form and provide assistance to each other as they work towards the production of meaningful and accurate messages (Antón & DiCamilla, 1998; DeGuerrero & Villamil, 1994; Donato, 1994; Kowal & Swain, 1994; Ohta, 1995; Swain, 1997; Villamil & DeGuerrero, 1996).

### **The role of L1 in classroom interaction**

Although collaborative group tasks are regarded as a good opportunity to activate language that has previously been presented to students and to refine their L2 output, an ongoing concern for teachers is the overuse of the L1 during classroom group tasks. However, recent research suggests that the L1 during collaborative tasks may play beneficial social and cognitive functions that facilitate the completion of the tasks and may lead to language learning (Antón & DiCamilla, 1998; Swain & Lapkin, 2000). The main question is what the optimal amount of L1 is. There is evidence that in some learning contexts such as during group tasks with school age children, learners overuse the L1 and do not make sufficient use of the target language (Alley, 2005; Carless, 2008).

Different task types elicit more or less L1 and learners may benefit more of one language or the other according to the task they are involved in. Oral communicative tasks, for instance, would tend to elicit more L2 than language analysis tasks, where L1 would be more accepted and perhaps beneficial (Carless, 2008). One would expect that when learners are constructing hypothesis on language use, trying to understand the grammatical use of a particular structure or deciphering the meaning of a language form, the use of L1 may be more efficient in accomplishing the objective of the talk. Aside from the nature of the task, task difficulty (caused by an unfamiliar topic, lack of clear instructions, time pressure to complete the task, or cognitive complexity) is also believed to increase the use of L1 (Carless, 2008).

Storch and Wigglesworth (2003) suggest that the amount of L1 generated during pair collaborative work may be conditioned by the learning context. For

example, in their experimental study, ESL learners at an Australian university were reluctant to use their L1 while engaged in a text reconstruction task and a joint composition task, even when the pairs shared their L1 and were encouraged to use it. Typically, in an ESL setting not all learners do share an L1 and the learners' L1 is not the dominant language of the community. Posterior interviews with the participants in the study revealed a strong inclination to use their L2 in the classroom for further practice and to accommodate to the norm outside the classroom, but also awareness of some value in the use of L1 for specific purposes such as explaining difficult vocabulary and grammatical concepts, discussing the task in more depth, and completing the task efficiently. Alegría de la Colina & García Mayo (2009) explored the use of L1 in relation to the type of task: a jigsaw task (visual stimulus), a dictogloss (oral stimulus), or a text reconstruction task (written stimulus). Regarding the total use of L1, both the dictogloss task and the text reconstruction task elicited more words in L1 than the jigsaw task. The study presented here also looks at the frequency of use of L1 during pair work across the types of task (speaking or writing).

### **The Study**

Building on the studies mentioned in the previous section, the present study investigates the collaborative discourse of beginning-level students of Spanish as they complete oral and writing tasks in pairs. The main purpose is to study the nature of the negotiation that takes place in collaborative activities in the language classroom with a focus on the types of negotiation that different tasks may elicit. That is, this study seeks to explore whether the type of task (oral or written) elicits differences in the quantity and quality of the interaction among pairs of learners. In particular, the focus is on what students talk about and what language (first or target language) they use while completing the task.

An intact class of eight adult learners of Spanish enrolled in an intensive first-semester Spanish language class at the university level was requested to complete one of the following tasks, which were related to the content of their lesson.

#### *TASK 1: Oral activity*

##### **Take 20 minutes to do the following:**

With your partner, discuss and decide what a typical house in the United States looks like and the furniture and objects that can be found in it.  
*Be ready to present an ORAL description of a typical house in the U.S.A.*

##### **Take 5 minutes to do the following:**

*Record your ORAL description of a typical house in the U.S.A.*

#### *TASK 2: Writing activity*

##### **Take 20 minutes to do the following:**

With your partner, discuss and decide what a typical house in the United States looks like and the furniture and objects that can be found in it.

*Be ready to read your WRITTEN description of a typical house in the U.S.A.*

**Take 5 minutes to do the following:**

*Record your WRITTEN description of a typical house in the U.S.A.*

Two pairs of students completed the oral task and the other two pairs completed the writing task. The pairing of students was done randomly. Two of the pairs were mixed gender. All participants were native speakers of English. The collaborative dialogue was audio recorded and transcribed, the transcriptions were then analyzed and coded for instances of negotiation.

**Types of negotiation in learners' collaborative interaction**

In the early input/interaction literature there was a focus on negotiation of meaning. Negotiation exchanges were defined as the exchanges in which "there is some overt indication that understanding between participants has not been complete" (Gass & Varonis, 1985, p.151). In these early studies, negotiation of meaning was viewed as a process by which participants in a conversation reach an understanding of the message being transmitted through the use of communicative strategies, such as gesturing, paraphrasing, self- and other repetition, clarification requests, etc. The following dialogue is a classic illustration of negotiation:

- NNS1: I'm living in Osaka.  
 NNS2: Osaka?  
 NNS1: yeah  
 NNS2: yeah Osaka, Osaka  
 NNS1: What do you mean?  
 NNS2: Osaka (Japanese word)  
 NNS1: oh  
 NNS2: I'm not really mean Osaka city. It's near city.  
 NNS1: near city?

(Gass & Varonis, 1985, p.152)

The notion of negotiation of meaning that emerges from the ACTFL National Standards is that of a process that occurs when the participants in the interaction "work together to make sure they understand each other. It's the give and take as they ask each other questions, discuss ideas, and share their thoughts" (Wilson, 1997).

The present study adopts and expands on the latter definition of negotiation. It considers instances of negotiating the exchanges in which learners work towards reaching a mutual understanding of various aspects of the task. Sometimes a negotiation episode consists of several exchanges in which learners discuss one aspect of the task, other times negotiation is almost tacit and agreement is reached by simply repeating a suggestion or by accepting it. In any case, negotiation is present at any time that a member of the pair presents a suggestion for the other member to consider and the subsequent interaction that occurs until an agreement is reached.

Four types of negotiation emerge in the interaction of our learners: negotiation of meaning, negotiation of content, negotiation of task, and negotiation of form.

*Negotiation of Meaning:* As in the early studies on input and interaction, negotiation of meaning is signaled by an overt indication of lack of understanding of an L2 form. The participants in the interaction try to understand each other through the use of communicative strategies such as repetition, clarification requests, and translation. That is the case in the following examples:

- (1) S1: *Mi casa es muy bonita.*  
S2: You have a pretty house?

In this example (1), the translation of the previous utterance with intonation question functions as a confirmation request that it is, in fact, the meaning of the utterance. In the example below (2), the repetition of the term with questioning intonation functions as a request for clarification of meaning, which results in S1 translating the term.

- (2) S1: *garaje*  
S2: *garaje?*  
S1: How do you say *garage*? I think it is *garaje*.  
S2: Is it? And maybe *un carro en la garaje*.  
[Is it? And maybe a car in the garage.]

*Negotiation of Content* refers to exchanges in which participants discuss and decide the ideas that will be included in the text, as in the following examples:

- (3) S1: *estudi-, estudio.*  
S2: Not in just in general.  
S1: study?  
S2: Not in a regular house...like  
S1: *Yo tengo estudio.*  
[I have a study.]  
S2: I know most people do but, you know.

Here, S1 suggests the inclusion of an office or study room in their description of a typical house in the U.S. S2 rejects the suggestion as inappropriate content for the text they are creating.

A further example of negotiation of the content to be included in the jointly constructed text follows:

- (4) S1: Dining room...ah...bedrooms, how many //you fig...  
S2: //bathroom.  
S1: Yeah, bathroom, how many do you bedrooms do you think there are in the average house?  
S1: Probably three.  
S2: Yeah, maybe two on the bathrooms.  
S1: Yeah.  
S2: OK

Sometimes negotiation is not as overt as in the previous examples and agreement is reached by simply repeating the idea or building on the idea proposed by the partner. This is what happens in the following exchange:

- (5) S1: chair  
 S2: chair and  
 S1: lamp  
 S2: Yeah...and shelves, OK, ah...well that takes care of our list of...things...mmm.

When S1 proposes to include *chair* in the text, S2 accepts the suggestion simply by repeating it in low volume and adding the word *and*, indicating that the suggestion is accepted and they are ready to move on in the creation of the text.

*Negotiation of Task* refers to interchanges dealing with the goals and procedures of the task. These include episodes in which the participants are trying to agree on the general objectives of the task as well as on how to go about performing the task, as illustrated in the following examples.

- (6) S1: So do you wanna do it that way where one asks one question one ask the other.  
 S2: Aha, aha...so one asks and answers and then asks.  
 S1: Then I'll ask a question and you answer.  
 S2: OK...*escritorio*  
 S1: Aha...they are already recording.  
 S2: So, should we record?  
 S1: If you want to, it's already recording stuff anyway.  
 S2: OK

In 6, the students are getting ready to record their oral presentation. They are discussing and agreeing on how to distribute the work in their presentation. They decide to adopt a question and answer format that will allow them equal participation.

In 7, the same students discuss and agree on organizational features of the text they are creating.

- (7) S1: Mmmm, let's see, do you wanna start with what the outside looks like? Or do you wanna go with the inside?  
 S2: Are we gonna give like a general description like it usually have three bedrooms and one bathroom or two bathrooms and a garage and...  
 S1: OK. Do you wanna do it? /Laugh/  
 S2: Then we can fill the house with furniture. /Laugh/

As it is in the case in the example above (7), in some instances there seems to be overlapping between negotiation of content and negotiation of task because in discussing how to organize the text, the content of the text is often discussed as well. In coding these instances, negotiation of task episodes include only those exchanges that have as primary focus the general organization of the text rather than specific ideas to include in the text.

*Negotiation of Form* refers to those episodes in which the participants in the interaction discuss language forms. These episodes are equivalent to the LRE

(Language Related Episode) and illustrate the concept of *linguaging*, commonly referred to in much of the recent research on collaborative dialogue in the language classroom. The term *linguaging* is used by Swain (2006, p. 96) as “producing language in an attempt to understand — to problem solve — to make meaning.” Recent attention to talk about language among second language learners engaged in collaborative tasks is driven by the belief that “linguaging is an important part of the learning process, as it transforms inner thoughts into external knowledge (externalization) and, conversely, it transforms external knowledge into internal cognitive activity (internalization)” (Swain, Lapkin, Knouzi, Suzuki, & Brooks, 2009, p. 5). These authors also provide evidence that the quality and quantity of linguaging about L2 grammatical concepts is related to subsequent test performance. Thus, it is suggested that linguaging plays an important role in the process of internalization of grammatical concepts.

In the completion of the tasks for this study, attention to language forms fell into three main areas: lexical searches, morphological aspects of the L2, and spelling of L2 words. There were numerous exchanges dealing with the search for appropriate Spanish words to express their ideas. Some illustrative episodes follow:

- (8) S1: All right, what's a rug?  
 S2: What is what?  
 S1: Rug  
 S2: Ahh...  
 S1: I don't know, *al* something.  
 S2: *alfombra*  
       [rug]  
 S1: That's it.
- (9) S1: We don't know stereo or music system, do we?  
 S2: Ah, ah.  
 S1: For the living room.  
 S2: The only thing I know like anything close to that would be *el radio*.  
 S1: That'll work.

Sometimes, as it happens in 8, the search for a lexical item is successful. In other cases, the search for a particular word is not successful. The search for the Spanish equivalent of stereo in (9) results in an approximation, substituting the word for something else that is close in meaning to the desired term. Yet, in other cases the search is abandoned.

Examples of interaction that focus on morphological aspects of the L1 are the following:

- (10) S1: *estante*  
       [shelf]  
 S2: *estantes*  
       [shelves]  
 S1: ahmm

S1 proposes a form, which is modified by S2 adding the plural morpheme. The new modified form is accepted in the last turn by S1. Similarly, in the following exchange, students discuss the Spanish gender for the word *rug*.

- (11) S1: *Tiene...una cocina, una sala, unos dormitorios, un o uno baños, un comedor y un jardín grande, that was my big yard, anyway. En el dormitorio, hay una cama, una lámpara, una alfombra, o it's un alfombra, right?//Is it un or una?*

[It has a kitchen, living room, bedrooms, a or some bathrooms, a dining room and a garden, that was my big yard anyway. In the bedroom there is a bed, a lamp, a rug [masculine ending-incorrect] or it's a rug [masculine ending -incorrect], right? Is it a [masculine] or a [feminine]]?

S2: That's *una*

[It's a [feminine]]

S1: *alfombra*

[rug]

S2: *alfombra*, yeah.

The next exchange also illustrates negotiation of form. In this case, students use metalanguage to discuss the morphology of a particular word.

- (12) S1: Wanna put down, ah, small tables like lamp tables //whatever?

S2: Aha.

S1: Ah...up here on...I guess I could put an *s* on this (?) it's an adjective, it's modifying a plural noun so I think we have to.

S2: Yeah.

S1: OK, it is to, then we want to put *peque-os*, ah, *-que-os*. OK.

[OK, it is to, then we want to put littl- [masculine plural ending], ah, little [masculine plural ending]

Finally, an illustrative exchange of focus on spelling:

- (13) S1: Oh, *alfombra*, let me get that one...*ci-o-eme*.

S2: *c-o-m-o-d-a* ((spelling))

S1: Where did the *acento* go?

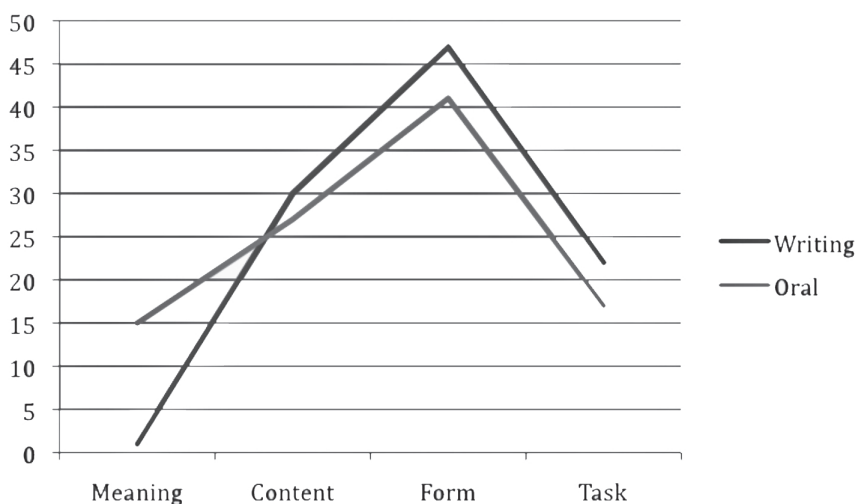
[Where did the stress go?]

S2: Over the first *o*.

### Frequency of negotiation in oral vs. written tasks

The findings of this study indicate that different types of task tend to elicit different kinds of negotiation. A frequency count of episodes of negotiation reveals some differences between the tasks. An episode is defined as “the segment of conversation in which learners discussed a particular aspect” (Alegría de la Colina & García Mayo, 2009, p. 330). The analysis of data shows that, whereas the number of episodes that focus on negotiation of content, form, and task is similar in writing and oral tasks, the oral tasks seem to engage students in negotiation

of meaning more than the writing tasks (Figure 1). Negotiation of meaning episodes account for 1% of negotiation exchanges in the writing task and 15% in the oral task. Frequencies for other types of negotiation are similar in both tasks: Negotiation of content amounts to 30% in the writing task and 27% in the speaking task, the frequency for negotiation of form is 47% in the writing task and 41% in the speaking task. Finally, negotiation of task amounts to 22% in the writing task and 17% in the speaking task.



**Figure 1.** Percentage of episodes of negotiation in writing vs. oral tasks

A likely interpretation of the difference in negotiation of meaning in the two types of task is that the speaking task seemed to invite students to create text directly in the target language more than the writing task, thus creating more opportunities for lack of understanding of L2 forms and negotiation of their meaning.

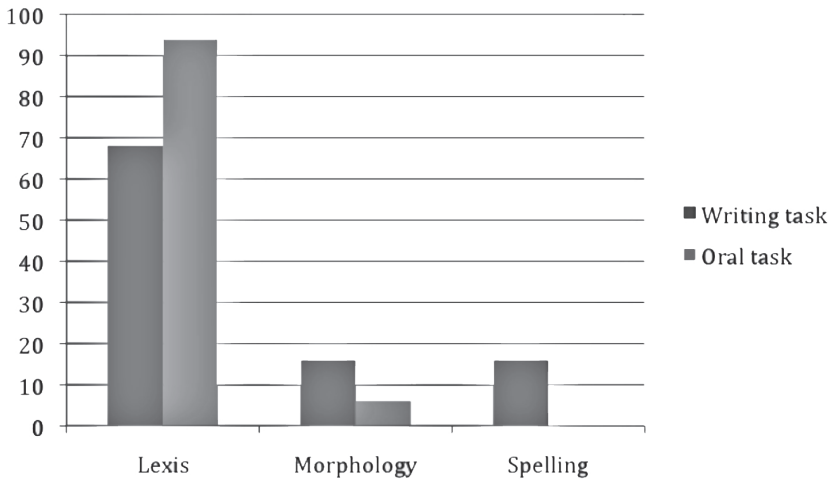
Further differences between task types are revealed in the various aspects of language form that students discuss (See Figure 2 on the next page).

As stated above, attention to language forms in the collaborative interaction of the learners focused on lexical searches, morphology and spelling. Most instances of negotiation of form in both tasks dealt with lexical searches (94% in the oral task and 68% in the writing task). However, the writing task elicited more negotiation exchanges focusing on morphology and spelling. Attention to morphological features accounted for 6% of negotiation of form episodes in the oral task and 16% in the writing task. Finally, there was no negotiation of spelling in the speaking task (an expected result given that there was no writing involved in this task type), whereas attention to spelling accounted for 16% in the writing task.

These frequencies suggest that writing tasks may foster a greater depth of conscious reflection on language forms than oral tasks. Indeed, these results are consistent with what has been argued by other researchers on the role of writing



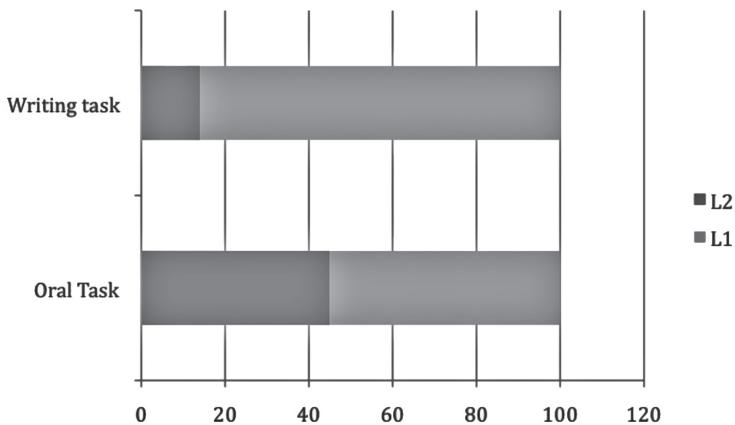
in adult foreign language learning (see for example Swain & Lapkin, 1998). As Wells (1998) says, collaborative writing tasks force the participants “to confront all aspects of the target language, from the choice of content and register appropriate to the situation defined by the task to the choice of lexical items and grammatical declensions and conjugations” (p. 351). Furthermore, Wells points out that a written text has an “objective existence” that invites evaluation and revision.



**Figure 2.** Percentage of episodes negotiating language forms

### Use of L1

Overall, this study suggests that L1 seems to play an important role in carrying out language tasks, at least with low-proficiency learners.



**Figure 3.** Percentage of turns in L1 and L2 by task type.

Then turns in the target language (L2) and the native language (L1) during the collaborative talk were quantified for both the oral and the writing task. As the results indicate, most of the talk was conducted in L1. However, the use of the target language (L2) was more predominant in the oral task than in the writing task. Almost half of the turns (45%) were entirely in L2 during the oral task compared to only 14% in the writing task. It is reasonable to assume that the results are related to the nature of the task itself. While the oral task elicited more creation of content directly in L2, mostly listing lexical items related to the household, the writing task favored longer turns in L1 dealing with discussion and reflection of text organization, spelling, and L2 morphology. These results are consistent with previous studies (Alegría de la Colina & García Mayo, 2009) that also found that variability in L1 use is related to the type of task.

### **Conclusion and pedagogical implications**

It is commonly accepted that collaborative activities foster a greater amount of linguistic production, thus providing more language practice and greater opportunities for negotiation of meaning and form during communicative exchanges, which has been claimed to be beneficial for language learning. If negotiation indeed plays a role in second language learning, it is essential for SLA research to investigate the nature of the interaction where negotiation occurs. Swain (1997, p. 124) suggests that "...a more direct source of cognitive process data may be in the collaborative dialogues themselves that learners engage in with other learners and with their teachers." The analysis presented here shows further support for the value of collaborative activities in the classroom. Collaboration provides opportunities for negotiation of meaning, form, and task goals and procedures. The results of this study add to our knowledge of the variable effects of tasks (Bygate, Skehan, & Swain, 2001; Nakahama, Tyler, & Van Lier, 2001). Specifically, the results suggest that oral tasks tend to engage learners in negotiation of meaning (which in turn produces more comprehensible input), whereas writing tasks tend to provide more opportunities for learners to consciously reflect on language forms and meanings. Both types of negotiation may be favorable to language learning.

The results presented here need to be taken with caution as we are dealing with a small sample of beginning-level students and the results are specific to particular tasks. Additionally, other learners may have taken a different orientation to these tasks (Coughlan & Duff, 1994). Nevertheless, these results are a promising indication that the issue deserves to be explored further. While the main purpose of this study is to illustrate a taxonomy of the types of negotiation that emerge during collaborative activity in the classroom and to show quantitative variation in interaction according to task type, the tendencies observed here will have to be corroborated by future studies with a larger sample of learners of different levels of proficiency and with learners of other languages. On a theoretical level, it is hoped that this study contributes to SLA research by providing insights into the negotiation (of form, content, and task goals and procedures) that occurs in learner-learner interaction during the performance of different types of tasks. From a pedagogical

standpoint, this study allows language teachers and supervisors to understand the nature of collaborative discourse and the opportunities for negotiation in various classroom tasks. Awareness of the linguistic aspects elicited by a variety of tasks may be helpful in planning lessons that foster functional proficiency in the second language. Collaborative interaction may also serve assessment purposes (Oskoz, 2005; Swain, 2001), as often the process of completing a task may be more revealing of learners' abilities than the completed product of the task. To this respect, recent research on dynamic assessment (Antón, 2009; Poehner, 2007) has highlighted the role of interaction in assessing language ability.

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# 3

## Story-Based Guided Participatory Grammar Teaching

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### Introduction

Over the years, various grammar-teaching methods have been implemented in language classrooms. Explicit vs. implicit grammar instruction is one of the most frequently discussed distinctions in teaching approaches and methods, and a great amount of research has explored the relative advantages and difficulties of such approaches in communicative language classrooms (Klapper & Rees, 2003; Moeller & Ketsman, 2010; Mojica-Díaz & Sánchez-López, 2010). Seeking an age-appropriate and cognitively balanced bridge between explicit and implicit grammar teaching in the world language classroom, the author of this article incorporated the PACE model of instruction (Adair-Hauck, Donato, & Cumo-Johanssen, 2000) in a university eight-week intensive beginning Japanese language class.

In the course, teaching of socio-cultural competence was given high priority. Intercultural sensitivity is a vital skill in the modern global interdependent society (Guiherme, 2006; Omaggio, 2001). Seeking cultural learning beyond typical surface-level topics such as food, clothes, and festivals (Bernhardt & Berman, 1999; Fox & Diaz-Greenberg, 2006; Omaggio, 2001), the author integrated cultural values into the stories used in her lessons.

The purpose of this article is to present a basic overview of the PACE model advocated by Adair-Hauck, Donato, & Cumo-Johanssen (2000) and recommend its application within grammatical and cultural units for world language classes. A sample lesson plan and reflection are provided following a brief review of theoretical frameworks and PACE model implementation procedures.

### **Explicit vs. Implicit Instruction and Story-Based Guided Participatory Approach**

Explicit instruction methods view language tasks as an intellectual and systematic problem solving skill (Stern, 1983) with the expectation that language learners will acquire precise declarative knowledge through a controlled process (Macaro & Masterman, 2006). Explicit instruction class activities often involve a teacher's direct explanation of grammar rules and exercises to practice the structural patterns often using mechanical and/or worksheet drills (Adair-Hauck et al., 2000). Form-focused instruction pinpoints the target grammar and helps students comprehend the syntactical rules (Long, 2007). Such focused practice can expedite the rate at which learners obtain grammar structures (Klapper & Rees, 2003). However, research indicates that acquiring grammatical rules is not always associated with the learners' capability to use the language creatively and spontaneously in communicative settings (Marsden, 2005). De-contextualized activities are often detached from students' interests or real-life situations and can result in unmotivated and unwilling responses in students as well (Adair-Hauck et al., 2000). This lecture-style approach puts teachers in an authoritative role, while learners are in a passive role (Adair-Hauck et al., 2000).

Implicit instruction, on the other hand, introduces target grammar structures or forms through meaningful input, such as stories, poems, songs, skits, and dialogues. Students are to avoid thinking about grammar, and to acquire implicit knowledge more intuitively and less consciously through ample input of language examples (Krashen, 1981; Stern, 1983).

While many agree with the importance of comprehensible input and language use in authentic, real-life situations (Paesani, 2005), instructions without grammar explanation can result in students missing the grammar points entirely (Long, 2007) or learning them inaccurately (Marsden, 2005). Second language educators often note that an inductive approach takes time and can frustrate adolescent or adult learners (Adair-Hauck et al., 2000; Moeller & Ketsman, 2010) because such learners are often already analytical with regard to language rules due to their first language learning experience. Furthermore, mature learners wish to hasten the learning process by consciously comparing and contrasting their own native language rules to the target language (Adair-Hauck et al., 2000).

Reflecting on the dichotomy of explicit and implicit instruction, Adair-Hauck et al. (2000) point out that neither approach acknowledges the critical roles of the classroom teacher in negotiating grammar explanations or the background knowledge students bring to classroom instruction. Adair-Hauck et al. (2000) follow the Vygotskian view of learning as a "dynamic, reciprocal, and interactive process" (p. 92), and advocate grammar instruction through the story-based



guided participatory approach. Using this approach, the instructor first seeks student comprehension of the target structure introduced through an authentic, contextualized story (ex. songs, poems, magazine articles, recorded conversations, etc.). Then, the teacher and the students collaboratively negotiate and co-construct a grammar explanation. Based on this story-based guided participatory approach, Adair-Hauck et al. (2000) designed the PACE model, a grammar teaching sequence that consists of four stages: **P**-presentation of a story, **A**-attention to the target structure, **C**-co-construction of the grammar explanation, and **E**-extension activities.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The story-based guided participatory approach and, more specifically, the PACE model were designed under the transactional/socio-cultural view of teaching and learning (Adair-Hauck et al., 2000). The transactional model views learning as a two-way process between the learner and the outside factors in which both are transformed through a mixture of doing and reflecting (Dewey & Bentley, 1949). This process is “fluent, embryonic, vital” (Dewey, 1990, p. 189), perpetual, ongoing, and never becomes final or fixed (Goodman, Smith, Meredith, & Goodman, 1987). Dewey (1990) contends that there is no such thing as absolute knowledge, and the teacher or textbook should not be the sole authority of the subject matter.

The transactional model emphasizes the social nature of learning. Based on Vygotsky’s (1978) notion of the zone of proximal development, it posits that students actively construct knowledge through social interaction (Au, 1993; Freeman & Freeman, 1992). As a result of communication with more capable peers or an adult, learners’ cognitive abilities grow and progress to a potential developmental level, which they will eventually be able to surpass independently in the future (Adair-Hauck et al., 2000; Vygotsky, 1978). As a facilitator, the teacher mediates and scaffolds student learning (Freeman & Freeman, 1994). Scaffolding lends a “helping hand” which is gradually withdrawn as the student’s capabilities grow (Cazden, 1988). Through scaffolding, teachers collaborate with students in the process of learning.

The role of the “organizer” is also a crucial one for transactional teachers (Flores, 1992). The teacher organizes curriculum, provides relevant and appropriate learning experiences, and creates “learning climates in which students can take risks without the fear of ‘failure’” (Weaver, 1990, p. 20). Dewey (1938) writes that an effective learning community does not organize itself. He maintains that it is the teacher’s responsibility to think and plan the learning environment in which all members can contribute something meaningful. Doake (1994) suggests that in a transactional model risk-taking is predominant, and experimentation and approximation are encouraged as students’ confidence and competence grow.

Student centeredness is another critical facet of a transactional approach. In transactional classrooms, students are active participants and owners of their learning. Dewey (1990) states: “The child is the starting point, the center, and the end” (p. 187). In transactional classrooms, it is the students’ needs, interests and

progress that define the curriculum. Students feel the ownership in the activities (Goodman, 1986). Dewey (1990) also explains that a student is “expected to ‘develop’ this or that fact or truth out of his own mind,” and “... is told to think things out, or work things out for himself.... (p. 196). In Dewey’s transactional view, students are seen as “explorers” who are “challenged to make sense of the world” (Freeman & Freeman, 1994, p. 43).

Transactional educators believe that people learn languages to function in a real-life context and view them as communication tools. According to Ken Goodman (1989), when children learn a language they know what they want to do with it, and this motivates the learners to control the language form so that it meets their needs: “Language is easy to learn if it meets a functional need the child feels” (p. 18). Edelsky, Altwerger, and Flores (1991) add that not just children but all language learners, including second and foreign language learners, learn languages for actual use.

When people learn languages to function in an authentic context, language learning occurs from whole to part (Goodman, 1986). Goodman explains, “We first use whole utterances in familiar situations. Then later we see and develop parts, and begin to experiment with their relationship to each other and to the meaning of the whole. The whole is always more than the sum of the parts, and the value of any part can be learned within the whole utterance in a real speech event” (p. 19). In language classrooms, however, teaching approaches often stress bottom-up instruction through the emphasis on forms or language fragments. Words, phrases, or sentences, when isolated, do not take on fuller meanings and often result in being unnatural and lifeless (Adair-Hauck et al., 2000). According to Goodman (1986), a focus on forms unrelated to a real-life situation makes language learning for language use more difficult.

In the story-based guided participatory approach students discuss, negotiate, and co-construct grammar knowledge with teacher assistance. Rather than presenting textbook grammar as a static concept, teachers encourage students to critically analyze and think about the grammar and share their thoughts in a safe environment where everyone respects each other’s ideas. Students explore, seek, and create grammar rules that are self-generated and make sense to them. The teachers guide the students’ discussion to scaffold learning so that they can reach their potential level (Vygotsky, 1978).

Language learning in the story-based guided participatory approach is “a thinking process” that, from the learner’s perspective, may be viewed as a “challenging and intellectual guessing game” (Adair-Hauck et al., 2000, p.157). Far from passive, the learners are active thinkers and hypothesizers who explore and discover new grammar knowledge (Adair-Hauck et al., 2000). While collaborating in learning activities with the teacher or with their classmates, students mature as language learners and obtain more established language skills and critical thinking abilities (Adair-Hauck et al., 2000).

The story-based guided participatory approach lesson begins with a presentation of a context and a content-rich story related to the students’ interests. Natural discourse, the meaning of a story, and experiencing new grammar in an

authentic situation are emphasized over form. Learners experience the whole story and then shift to the grammar explanation and practices (Adair-Hauck et al., 2000). Teachers plan and implement communicative activities that are similar to real-life situations that help students to function outside the classroom.

### **The PACE Model**

Adair-Hauck, Donato, and Cumo (1994) introduced the PACE model as an integrated method of implementing a four-step guided participatory grammar teaching approach. PACE model instruction begins with the presentation of an authentic contextualized story. After students grasp the meaning of the introduced story, the class turns their attention to the critical grammar structure. Then, the students reflect upon and analyze the target item and co-construct a grammar explanation with the guidance of the instructor. In the final stage, extension activities provide the learners with opportunities to practice newly learned skills in communicative settings. Adair-Hauck et al. (2000) description of the PACE model is summarized below.

#### *Presentation*

The PACE model instruction begins with an interactive presentation of a natural and thematic story, such as a folktale, a poem, a short story, a total physical response (TPR) presentation, an authentic audio recording, a skit, or a demonstration of a real-life task (for example, making sushi). Teachers can also use dialogues from language textbooks or simplified narratives, as long as they are engaging episodically organized, have a message and meaning that is worth learning and discussing (Adair-Hauck et al., 2000). The purpose of using stories here is to achieve comprehension through the necessary negotiation of meaning. This presentation stage can be a part of a class session or stretch over several sessions, depending on the nature of the story selected. It can also include pre-story telling activities that provide necessary background knowledge.

While presenting the story, the teacher scaffolds student comprehension through techniques such as total physical response (TPR), asking strategic questions, and providing cloze activities. The focus here is on meaning, and the class does not directly focus on the grammar items. Instead, the story content “foreshadows” the target grammar through the use of integrated discourse and highlights the structure for the lesson. Ausubel, Novak, and Hanesian note that foreshadowing a grammar point is similar to the use of an advanced organizer that supplies an “anchoring framework” for the new learning objectives (as cited in Adair-Hauck et al., 2000, p. 152).

Effective story selection is a critical process in the PACE model instruction, and singling out suitable teaching materials for a language classroom can be a challenge. Adair-Hauck et al. (2000) provide guidelines for choosing an appropriate text for a PACE lesson. These guidelines include selecting stories that are appealing, appropriate for students’ age and linguistic-proficiency, reflect their

lives, imply connections to the academic content, represent some aspect of the target culture, and sufficiently represent the focused grammar structures.

#### *Attention*

This step aims to turn the learners' attention to the target structure and avoids using class time on unnecessary or irrelevant explorations. As previously mentioned, implicit instruction can fail to highlight the intended grammar points to students (Long, 2007). Oftentimes, students may comprehend the meaning of the story but fail to notice the targeted structure introduced in the story. In the attention stage of the PACE model, teachers help students to recognize the target grammar structure by shifting their attention from semantic clues to syntactic clues. The teacher may use several teaching techniques, such as highlighted written texts, repetition of specific passages or sentences, and cloze activities.

#### *Co-construction of Explanation*

The third stage is the Co-construction of an explanation, in which students and the teacher collaboratively build new grammar knowledge. During this process, students are "guided to hypothesize, guess, make predictions, or come to generalizations about the target form" (Adair-Hauck et al., 2000, p. 155). Teachers ask clear and direct questions to assist students' discovery of regular structural patterns, (Adair-Hauck et al., 2000). Teachers also encourage students to ask them or each other for clarification and negotiation of meaning. Once students produce a hypothesis, they will test it out by applying it to a new situation. It is the teachers' responsibility to be aware of students' abilities and offer sufficient guidance as well as explicit information when needed. It is critical for teachers not to hold back their expertise and to guide the class to produce a grammar explanation that is accurate and, at the same time, reflects and honors the students' views and understanding.

#### *Extension Activities*

Extension activities offer learners opportunities to develop communication skills using the target grammar in meaningful and realistic contexts. The activities here should "be interesting, related to the theme of the lesson in some way, and, most importantly, allow for creative self-expression" (Adair-Hauck et al., 2000, p. 156). It is also necessary to address other objectives, such as cultural learning, here. Possible activities at this stage will be information gap activities, role plays, dramatization, communicative games, writing projects, interviews, surveys, and out-of-class projects.

### **Classroom Application Example**

This project was designed for an intensive beginning Japanese language class at a large university. The class met five days a week for eight weeks and covered a year's worth of curriculum. The teaching team consisted of three native speakers of Japanese: the author/instructor and two teaching assistants. All lessons were designed and conducted with the PACE model structure in mind and with

emphasis on language in context and the active role of students. The instructor was in charge of the “lecture” session that covered the phases of presentation, attention, and co-construction of grammar rules. She also aided the teaching assistants in the preparation of daily lesson plans for the sessions that focused on extension of knowledge through communicative activities.

The PACE model emphasizes the use of authentic materials in the presentation phase of instruction. Authentic materials for Japanese, however, are generally not comprehensible to students of beginning levels of proficiency due to an abundance of colloquial discourse, varying registers, Kanji [Chinese characters], difficult vocabulary items, and the absence of Indo-European cognates. To introduce the target grammar in a realistic context, the lecturer improvised and created most stories for the presentation stage. Teaching assistants collaborated in the creation of the stories and participated in their presentations. The stories were thematic and contextualized and contained controlled vocabulary and sentence structures.

When designing the lessons, the instructor strove to introduce cultural information within the PACE model framework. Despite a strong professed commitment to cultural learning in world language classrooms, a shortage of time, limited students’ knowledge of the target language, and a lack of background knowledge on the part of the teacher often compound to make cultural lessons shallow and largely product-centered (Bernhardt & Berman, 1999; Omaggio, 2001; Schulz, 2007). With this in mind, conscious effort was made to include cultural learning (cultural perspectives, in particular) in the beginning Japanese lessons.

The following is a lesson description with the story-based guided grammar/cultural learning activities used in the course. The class explores the Japanese cultural concept of modesty or humility through the story written by the instructor. The target grammar of this lesson is adjectives in the present negative form (in Japanese adjectives are conjugated to express tense and affirmation or negation). A review of basic adjectives and furniture vocabulary items is also a learning objective of the lesson.

English is used in the interest of time and so that students’ limited linguistic knowledge would not hinder learning and developing a schemata (introduction of cultural knowledge — Japanese perspectives on modesty was followed by a discussion).

#### *Pre-Storytelling Activity*

Prior to the PACE lesson, students are observed giving compliments using affirmative adjectives and then accepting compliments saying *zarigatou gozaimasu* [thank you]. Because acceptance of compliments could be a cultural faux pas in Japanese, appropriate ways of accepting compliments should be taught and the importance of expressing modesty and humility should be stressed.

As a pre-storytelling activity, the class reads a case study scenario question from a cultural learning book (Kataoka, 1991) written in English. In this scenario Mike, a Japanese language student, comes to Japan and receives many compliments. He is, of course, delighted to receive this praise and replies saying “thank you”. One day, his Japanese friend points out that he shouldn’t say “thank you” so often,

which puzzles Mike. The text offers four possible reasons why saying “thank you” in response to a compliment would be inappropriate. The students discuss the correct answer in pairs and conclude that Mike should have denied some of the compliments in order to express humility. Then, the teacher and the students briefly talk about the importance of modesty in the Japanese culture and share their opinions in English.

*Presentation*

The instructor introduces a short story titled *Chen san wa Ichinensei* [Chen is a first-year Japanese student]. In *Chen san wa Ichinensei*, the protagonist Chen learns about the virtue of humility in his Japanese language class. So, when Chen’s classmate Yan visits and compliments him on his room and furniture, Chen is modest and denies all of the compliments appropriately. Yan, confused by Chen’s denial of every compliment, makes a negative remark but then realizes that it offends his friend. The story’s humorous ending shows Yan even more confused. The conversation between the two depicts a common exchange that students may encounter when visiting homes in Japan when studying abroad. The exchange contains repetitive structure patterns: compliments using the adjective affirmative (ex. “Nice room!”) and denial of the compliments using adjectives in their negative conjugations (ex. “No, not that nice”).

The following script was used in the story presentation:

チェンさんは日本語（にほんご）の一年生（いちねんせい）です。  
*Chensan wa nihongo no ichinensei desu.*  
 [Chen san is a first-year Japanese language student.]

ある日（ひ）日本語（にほんご）の先生（先生）がいました。  
*Aruhi nihongo no sensei ga iimashita.*  
 [One day, his Japanese teacher said, “You are not supposed to accept praise with ‘thank you.’ The Japanese normally deny such compliments by saying ‘No, no.’”]

チェンさんはいい学生です。トライしてみることにしました。  
*Chensan wa ii gakusei desu. Torai shite miru koto ni shimashita.*  
 [Chen san is a good student, so he decided to give it a shot.]

ともだちのヤンさんがうちにきました。「こんにちは。」「チェンさんこんにちは。」  
*Tomodachi no Yansan ga uchii ni kimashita.”Konnichiwa.””Chensan Konnichiwa.”*

[The next day, his friend Yan san visited his house. “Hello, Chen san.” “Hello.”]

「おおきいうちですね。」 ヤンさんはいいました。

*“Ooki uch desu ne.” Yansan wa iimashita.*

[“It is a big house, isn’t it?” Yan san said.]

「いえいえ、おおきくありませんよ。」 チェンさんはいいいました。

*“Te ie, ookiku arimasenn yo.” “Chensan wa iimashita.”*

[“No, no. It’s not big,” Chen san said.]

「きれいなへやですね。」 ヤンさんはいいました。

*“Kireina heya desu ne.” Yansan wa iimahsita.*

[“It is a beautiful room, isn’t it?” Yan san said.]

「いえいえ、きれいじゃありませんよ。」 チェンさんはいいいました。

*“Te ie, kireija arimasen yo.”Chensan wa iimashita.*

[“No, no. It’s not beautiful,” Chen san said.]

「すてきなソファですね。」 ヤンさんはいいました。

*“Sutekina sofa desu ne.” Yansan wa iimashita.*

[“It is a wonderful sofa, isn’t it?” Yan san said.]

「いえいえ、すてきじゃありませんよ。」 チェンさんはいいいました。

*“Te ie, sutekija arimasen yo.”Chensan wa iimashita.*

[“No, no. It’s not wonderful,” Chen san said.]

「りっぱなテーブルですね。」 ヤンさんはいいました。

*“Rippana table desu ne.” Yansan wa iimashita.*

[“It is a big great table, isn’t it?” Yan san said.]

「いえいえ、りっぱじゃありませんよ。」 チェンさんはいいいました。

*“Te ie, rippaja arimasenyo.”Chensan wa iimashita.*

[“No, no. It’s not great,” Chen san said.]

「いいおふろですね。」 ヤンさんはいいました。

*“Ii ofuro desu ne.” Yansan wa iimashita.*

[“It is a nice bath, isn’t it?” Yan san said.]

「いえいえ、よくありませんよ。」 チェンさんはいいいました。

*“Te ie, yoku arimasenn yo.”Chensan wa iimashita.*

[“No, no. It’s not nice,” Chen san said.]

ヤンさんは 少（すこ）しわからなくなりました。

*Yansan wa sukoshi wakaranaku narimashita.*

[Yan san got a little confused.]

## 42 All Aboard the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Express!

あっそうか。ヤンさんはわかりました。

*A souka. Yansan wa wakarimashita.*

[“Oh, I get it.” Yan san got an idea.]

チェンさんのへやはせまいですね。ヤンさんは言いました。ところが、

*Chensan no heya wa semaidesu ne. Yansan wa iimashita. Tokoroga,*

[“Your room is small, isn’t it?” Yan san said, but...]

「せまくありませんよ。」 チェンさんは おこってしまいました。

*“Semakuarimasenn yo.”Chensan wa okotte shimaimashita.*

[“It is not small!” Chen san replied upset.]

やっぱりわからないヤンさんです。

*Yappari wakaranai Yansan desu.*

[Yan-san just doesn’t get it...]

The story can be presented with Web2.0 tools, such as ToonDoo (ZOHO Corp, Inc., 2010) or VoiceThread (2010) (See Appendices A, B, and C). *Kamishibai*, a traditional Japanese paper-theater style of story-telling using painted illustrations (Nash, 2009), is a possible alternative way to present this lesson (See Appendix D). The teacher can show VoiceThread slides with attached audio, or read aloud the story while showing the visuals with ToonDoo or *Kamishibai* papers.

Most vocabulary items, such as adjectives and furniture terms used in the story, are part of the target vocabulary for the current chapter or from the previous chapters. The combination of familiar vocabulary, visuals, and repetition aids student comprehension. The discussion of Japanese modesty prior to the story presentation also introduces context and activates necessary background knowledge. After the story, the class discusses why Yan was upset and what went wrong in the communication. The story in the presentation phase features the target grammar (the adjective negative), but grammar is not discussed at this stage. The focus here is on meaning and comprehension. Simple content questions are presented to students in the target language, and students speak Japanese as much as possible. Some parts of the discussion (such as Why was Chen upset?), being beyond the students’ present level, are conducted in English. The use of English here allows novice Japanese students to communicate more complicated concepts with less stress in a shorter period of time.

### *Attention*

In the attention stage, using slides (via PowerPoint, *Kamishibai*, etc.), the instructor projects extracted segments of the core conversation containing compliments (adjective affirmative) and negation (adjective negative). The instructor asks the students to compare sentences and to focus on the adjectives. The class identifies the target grammar of the day (adjective negative conjugation), summarizes the core conversations, and explains how adjective negatives are used in the story.



*Co-construction of the Grammar Explanation*

In small groups, students compare and analyze the adjective affirmatives and negatives introduced in the story. They discuss the formation rules and create a poster with the hypothesized adjective negative conjugation rules. The students view and comment on each other's posters and test their hypotheses by applying them to different adjectives. The instructor facilitates and guides student discussion by asking questions and/or providing suggestions.

*Extension/Communicative Activities*

Subsequent extension activities provide opportunities for students to use the adjective negation in various contexts. First, the class engages in a short conversation practice in pairs, complimenting each other and replying with modesty appropriate in a Japanese context. For example, one student praises another student saying *Kireina shatsu desu ne* [Your shirt is pretty], and the other student replies, *Ie ie, kireija arimasen yo* [No, no. It is not pretty]. This relatively simple interaction is added as an opportunity to practice adjective conjugations. It is a challenge for some students to distinguish the type of adjectives and generate accurate negative forms at early stages of language learning. While exchanging compliments and negations, the students practice culturally appropriate body language, facial expressions, and voice tones and making this seemingly simple exercise meaningful and similar to a real-life conversation.

In the following practice session, teaching assistants may conduct information gap activities (i.e., students ask each other questions about their homes/rooms and furniture they have and conduct role plays). Sample conversations using the target grammar here may include: *San no heya wa ookii desu ka* [Is san's/your room big?]. The response may be *Iie, ooiku arimasen* [No it is not big]. A role play might have students visit their classmates' houses and give compliments on their houses, furniture, and décor while their partners respond appropriately.

**Reflection and Recommendations**

Conducting an eight-week-long intensive language course with the PACE model uncovered both advantages and challenges. The PACE model enabled the efficient delivery of comprehensible input sufficient for student learning and increased proficiency. It is common in language classes, especially at the college level, to focus more on production (output) over input. An emphasis is placed on maximizing student (and minimizing teacher) speaking time. Thus, minimal in-class time is allotted to listening tasks. In addition, many materials prepared for instruction in the Japanese courses contain unnaturally slow conversations with limited vocabulary. For beginners with limited Japanese knowledge such materials are beneficial and may be irreplaceable, however, it is rare that students find such listening practice enjoyable. The internet provides access to Japanese television programs and a wide selection of video clips. The only issue is that many, if not most, of such video resources are beyond elementary students' language level and do not offer sufficient comprehensible input.

The presentation stage of the PACE model is an opportunity to provide an ample amount of comprehensible language input for students. The students in the author's class noted that it was valuable to see and hear native speakers talking about something "interesting" at their level. They also commented that they looked forward to the daily classes that always began with entertaining stories, and those stories helped them to survive an intensive program covering a year's worth of material in two months.

Another possible advantage of guided-participatory grammar teaching is the development of students' analytical and critical thinking skills as well as grammar understanding. Though empirical research data of students' progress was not collected, the teaching team recognized that the students began analyzing the given grammar explanations more carefully and asking more detailed questions as the semester progressed. By the end of the semester, several students commented that participating in grammar discussions instead of simply reading textbook explanations made them think more deeply about grammar from different perspectives, and this facilitated their grammar learning.

The story and discussion on Japanese modesty added real-life cultural meaning and purpose for the language exchanges. In the absence of the supplied context, they would have been nothing more than ordinary mechanical drills. Students also appreciated the emphasis on cultural learning and applied their growing knowledge during conversations. By the end of the lesson, they were able to use proper tone, facial expressions, and body language when replying to compliments.

One of the challenges for Japanese teachers with this approach was a shortage of appropriate materials. Authentic literature and audio-visual resources that include the target structures without sacrificing comprehensibility for beginning Japanese students are somewhat limited. The instructor created most stories from scratch. The teaching team also generated many skits and performed them for students. Doing so required a great amount of time to brainstorm and write story lines and skit scripts, draw pictures, and practice for skit performances. A time commitment of this magnitude can be a challenge for many classroom teachers who are already swamped with daily duties.

In-class time spent on the co-construction of grammar explanation could be another obstacle. While grammar exploration can build analytical thinking skills and grammar understanding, unexpected student questions and occasional disagreements among classmates can make it difficult to manage conversations smoothly within limited class time. The teacher must be ready and able to guide class discussions away from unproductive (though perhaps meaningful) tangential discussions.

Modifying the PACE model by providing explicit instruction, sometimes in the native language when students struggle to create and share knowledge on their own, might offer a possible solution for some of these issues. Networking with other teachers and sharing lesson plans and materials can reduce preparation time. With modern technology, educators can connect to each other worldwide and create virtual conferencing and study groups to give educators platforms for sharing ideas and materials.

*Storytelling with Web2.0 Tools*

Technology use offers an avenue of support for teachers producing stories for instruction. Electronic materials also fit well with the learning styles of the digital generation in contemporary classrooms (Prensky, 2001). Today, various electronic story-telling tools to generate more sophisticated presentations and make their materials accessible online are available to colleagues and students. For example, a free Web2.0 tool, ToonDoo (ZOHO Corp, Inc., 2010) allows the user to create a comic strip online in a short time. ToonDoo offers various panel patterns, backgrounds, characters, props, and bubble shapes. Teachers can also use their own images uploaded on computers. Using such features, teachers can create a professional-looking story presentation in a relatively short time. Appendix A contains examples from the *Chen san wa ichinesei* story (the story introduced earlier) created with ToonDoo. The characters and the background in both slides are available on the website. Appendix B is the same example but with photos taken and uploaded by the instructor.

VoiceThread (2010) is another tool that can assist teachers with the new generation of digital story presentations. VoiceThread is “a collaborative, multimedia slide show that holds images, documents, and videos” (VoiceThread, 2010). It limits the number of free presentations, but its features, such as enabling participants to doodle and leave comments on other peoples’ slides, expand options for language educators to create engaging story presentations. Appendix C is a sample slide of the *Chen san wa Ichinesei* created with VoiceThread. With audio files attached to the slides, students are able to listen to the story while reading the text. It is also possible for students to export the slides to MP3 players or DVDs.

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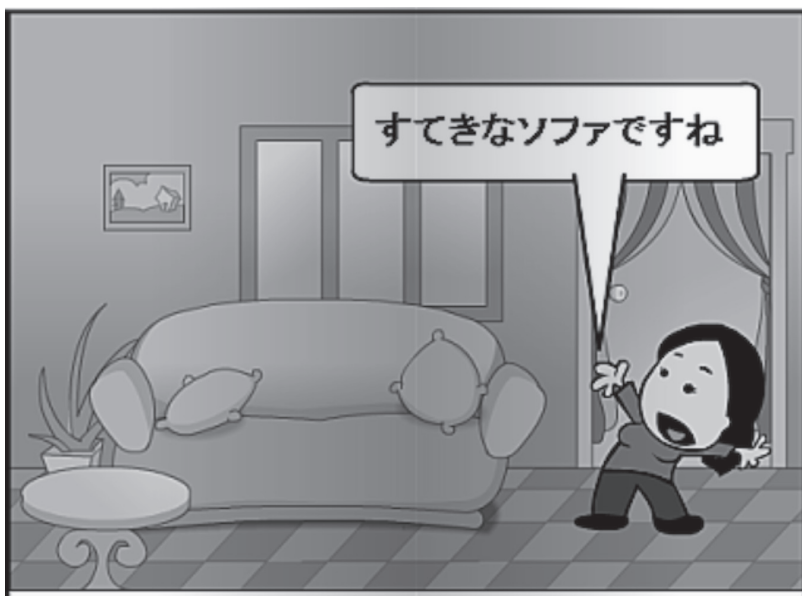
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Appendix A

ToonDoo Example



“It’s a wonderful sofa, isn’t it?”



“No, no. It is not wonderful.”

### Appendix B

#### ToonDoo Example with Photo



“It’s a wonderful sofa, isn’t it?”

### Appendix C

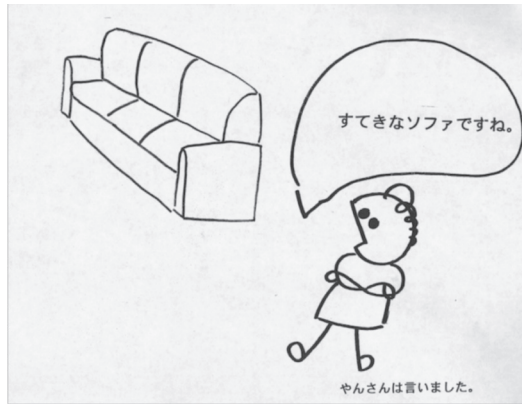
#### VoiceThread Example



“It’s a wonderful sofa, isn’t it?”

**Appendix D**

*Kamishibai* Example



“It’s a wonderful sofa, isn’t it?” Yan san said.



“No, no. It’s not wonderful,” Chen san said.



# 4

## Drama Pedagogy in the Language Classroom

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Many educators promote drama and dramatic play as an integral part of the language learning process, a deeply personal process that “involves aesthetic, emotional, and intercultural dimensions and that ought to be considered an identity-related phenomenon” (Schmenk, 2004, p. 7). Today there is a large body of literature on drama in the language classroom, as drama is no longer considered an extracurricular activity. The teaching of literature through drama, according to Brisson (2007), can bring students “back from the virtual into the real world, reconnect them with themselves as a whole, strengthen their interpersonal and cultural skills, as well as stimulate their motivation to learn beyond the classroom” (Introduction section, para. 7).

In this article the author defines the concept of drama pedagogy and its benefits for language learning and provides a model of implementation based on the German short story *Das Brot* [The Bread] by Wolfgang Borchert (Appendix A). Students read and interpret the story in depth and learn about the individual characters and the socio-political situation in postwar Germany. In addition, they are asked to work and perform with their closely and collaboratively with classmates.

The author’s work with dramatic play was reinforced through multiple workshops, including *Theater im Unterricht* [Theater in the Classroom], an intensive seminar organized by the Goethe-Institut (n.d.) in Berlin, and *So ein Theater! Darstellendes Spiel im Handlungsorientierten Deutschunterricht* (Even, 2009) [What a drama! Drama Pedagogy in the Action-oriented German Classroom], facilitated by the Goethe-Institut in Chicago.

This article is the result of these workshops, action research, and anecdotal data collected in a series of German classes at the University of Arkansas, Little Rock, and in university-wide workshops. While this article focuses on the intermediate-level German language learner, it is important to mention that drama pedagogy is beneficial for all levels of foreign language students (Wettemann, 2007). With this method, students are able to use their respective language skills in a more authentic speaking situation.

Language learning and cultural understanding are vital to success in the current global environment of the twenty-first century in which students live and work. Drama pedagogy responds to the needs of the millennial generation. It focuses on global awareness and prepares students for an increasingly complex world. Drama pedagogy uses real world data and teaches life and career skills, such as flexibility and adaptability, initiative and self-direction, social, cross-cultural skills, and leadership (Wagner, Ray-Treviño, & Garnett, 2010).

### **Drama Pedagogy: A Brief Introduction**

Drama pedagogy is an interdisciplinary, holistic teaching and learning approach (Weiss, 2007) that uses techniques from the performing arts. It is a learner-centered teaching method that removes the teacher from the center stage, thus the instructor is more a facilitator than a lecturer (Borge, 2007). In addition, drama pedagogy emphasizes social, interpersonal, and kinesthetic learning with a foundation in improvisation. In this respect, it is a realization and extension of communicative language teaching that helps students make connections with characters in a literary text. The communicative situations achieved through drama stimulate and challenge students' ability to take on grammar, literary texts, and cultural concepts. Exercises like the *Hot-seat* (discussed later in this article) help the instructor include all students in the learning process.

Drama allows students to experience a new role or situation in a safe environment, because the fictional context serves as a safety zone. Students are willing to participate more eagerly if they take on a role (Weiss, 2007). Dramatic play provides a means to involve students' whole personalities in an emotional and autobiographical dimension and not just their thought processes (Borge, 2007). In addition, drama can build tolerance, empathy, and confidence. Furthermore, dramatic exercises demand discipline and self-control and develop the ability to work in a team.

The next section focuses on the practical implementation of dramatic play in the foreign language classroom with sample activities in German. The author demonstrates how this approach can support language acquisition in the L2 classroom and how it can be used to introduce and analyze literary texts. Wolfgang Borchert's short story *Das Brot* (1946) was chosen for this purpose.

### **Wolfgang Borchert: *Das Brot* [The Bread]**

Wolfgang Borchert's *Das Brot* lends itself well to the approach of dramatic play. It is a short, relatively easy text that can be incorporated into intermediate-level

German language classes as a historical and cultural unit on postwar Germany or a grammar unit such as the *Imperfekt* [simple past tense]. In addition, the work accurately reflects the social reality of the immediate postwar period. At the same time, the story depicts timeless values, and it is commonly used in German high schools, both in language and literature classes and in ethics/religion classes.

The German author and playwright Wolfgang Borchert (1921-1947) was deeply affected by World War II and the Nazi dictatorship. His work is among the best of the so-called *Trümmerliteratur* [Rubble literature] movement immediately following that era. Initially a bookseller and an actor, Borchert wrote *Das Brot* in 1946. Set in postwar Germany, the plot is inherently dramatic as the main characters, a married couple, confront hunger and communication barriers when the husband eats the last piece of bread.

### **Dramatic Approach to the Topics of Hunger and Communication Barriers**

#### *Warm-up*

Acting is a physical activity and actors should therefore warm up and energize before the dramatic play. Warm-up exercises are essential; they lay down ground rules and expectations and put students at ease. Both Maïke Plath (2009) and Ingo Scheller (1998, 2004) list multiple warm-up exercises in their respective works. Another good source for German teachers is the website *Übung der Woche* (n.d.) [Exercise of the Week]. It is important to coordinate the exercises and make the warm-up process relevant to the unit theme. In this example, the themes are hunger and communication barriers.

The following exercises increase concentration and foster communication and awareness:

- *Ich gebe Dir eine Zahnbürste...* [I hand you a toothbrush...]: Students pretend to pass an imaginary object to the next person. This exercise can be done quietly or be supported by verbal expressions, such as short statements, exclamations, or complete sentences, depending on the individual student and the context.<sup>1</sup>
- *Klatschkreis* [Circular Clapping]: Students form a circle. The first student claps hands and passes the clapping action as quickly as possible to the next person on the right, saying, “Yes!” Students are directed to turn their entire body towards the person next to them and try out different ways to say, *Ja* [Yes] with a different speaking mode and pitch every time. The goal is to establish continual rhythmic clapping around the circle. As a variation, students change direction and say, *Nein* [No] while turning to the left. They use *ja* and *nein* by introducing a *stop*, which means the clapping action bounces off and back and has to go in the other direction.
- *Zählkreis* [Circular Counting]: Students form a circle. The goal of the game is to have random students count up to the number of participants, one number at a time and ascending (e.g., if there are 15 students in the group, the count ends at 15). If multiple students shout out a number at the same time,

the count starts over. In order to make it more difficult, a possible variation is to do this with eyes closed.

- *Blindenführer* [Guiding]: Students pair up. Student A closes his/her eyes. Student B leads/guides the partner through the room by placing one hand on the partner's shoulder.

**Variation 1:** Students are led through the room without touching; this is especially useful when working on directions.

**Variation 2:** One person leads a line of multiple students through the room.

After students are energized by the warm-up, the lesson continues with the following activities:

#### *Example 1: Empathy Questions*

A picture suitable for the topic generally introduces this exercise. Teachers can use a picture from an existing classroom collection and show it on a projector or get it directly off the Internet. If looking for something in particular, teachers may want to start with Flickr (Yahoo, Inc., 2010a) and search for photos that fit within the Creative Commons license guidelines (Yahoo, Inc., 2010b). Such a search assures that the images will be royalty free. A picture serves as a discussion starter and a stimulus for student ideas. The goal is to encourage students' creative thinking. As a follow up, students are asked to write a dialogue based on the picture about what is happening or imagine what happened before or will happen later.

Students develop empathy by being able to identify with the characters shown, the characters' living conditions, and general circumstances. It is important to pose empathy questions slowly and multiple times to give students time to formulate their answers. Questions may cover the following: the person's identity, living situation, family, everyday activities, job, hobbies, friends, relationships, and social background. This is a multiple-step exercise:

- (1) Each student chooses a person from the picture and adopts that person's 'identity' without telling others about it.
- (2) The teacher asks questions, which students answer individually on behalf of the person they portray.
- (3) The students discuss their feelings about the situation while communicating in the target language in small groups as they continue to personify the characters presented in the picture.

It is not important that the students remember every detail and every question. They may express their feelings in a dialogue with another group member or simply choose to report as a narrator.

The goal of this exercise is for students to develop their thoughts and individual ideas shaped by their character and to change their perspective from the 'outside' to the 'inside'. The students should reflect and empathize with the character, channeling the character's feelings and thoughts, and through this process leave the realm of an outside observer.

The setting may prove problematic for students who do not have sufficient knowledge of World War II and postwar Germany, let alone Wolfgang Borchert and *Trümmerliteratur*, but they can definitely relate to the economic demands and stresses of the immediate postwar era and compare it to their own financial duress of recent years. Through the warm-up exercises, the teacher introduces the otherwise foreign topic on a personal level. By looking at the pictures and answering questions, students are able to connect with their memories and feelings and understand the text *Das Brot* on a different level by channeling their emotions.

Using the picture below, the teacher may ask the following questions:

Who are you?

What is your relationship to the other person/persons?

Where are you?

What are you doing?

Are you comfortable?

Are you eating or drinking something? What?

What time is it?

How long have you been here?

What are you going to do next?

How are you feeling today?

How would you characterize yourself? What kind of person are you?

What is your social background?

Do you have a large family or no family at all?



**Figure 1.** *Communication Barriers? A Couple at the Dinner Table* (Yourdon, 2008). Made available under Creative Commons Licence.

*Example 2: Frozen Picture*

Using the same picture as in the previous exercise or another picture appropriate to the context as a starting point, students create original *Frozen Pictures/Frozen Frames* suitable for the topic at hand (e.g. communication or miscommunication, family and friends, etc.). In cinema, a frozen frame is a photographic snapshot in which a given story line (a moment in time and space) is paused. In the classroom, a single person or a group of students can create an improvised 'frozen' image. The actor takes the stage and assumes a posture. Once the image is created, individual participants are directed to say out loud the first thing that comes to mind on behalf of the person they are representing. It should be noted that still "images do not just show what is going on, but also serve as physical metaphors that go beyond the actual situation, capturing the essence of the moment" (Even, 2009, p. 1).

**Variation 1:** The class comments on the *Frozen Picture* and students describe what they see.

**Variation 2:** The students create sounds and movements appropriate for the topic until the teacher's command to "Freeze!" Students immediately begin describing what is going on in their mind (related to the scene). In this exercise students verbalize what they are doing while they perform in the drama. This is an excellent way to simultaneously create language and movement. Their performance can therefore provide valuable feedback for the teacher on what students feel while they are learning.

Creating and working with *Frozen Pictures* is easy to learn but requires a certain amount of discipline and precision. The more precisely a *Frozen Picture* is created, the easier its interpretation. The more committed the volunteer, the more engaged the rest of the class will be, patiently awaiting the completion of the *Frozen Picture*. However, it is best if the instructor explains and demonstrates how to create a *Frozen Picture* before asking students to create their own. Here are a few simple rules for students:

- Do not speak, laugh, or giggle while building a *Frozen Picture*.
- Take time to carefully 'sculpt' facial expression and body position.
- 'Freeze' the picture.
- Do not move after you have 'frozen' the picture.
- Interpret the *Frozen Picture*.

There are several options to complete this activity:

- (a) The audience is asked to interpret or ask questions;
- (b) The *Frozen Picture* characters start speaking;
- (c) An alter-ego of the 'frozen' character says what s/he thinks;
- (d) The creator of the *Frozen Picture* explains the picture;
- (e) The instructor engages in a provocative dialogue with the 'frozen' character ('teacher in role').

Working with *Frozen Pictures* sets various linguistic learning processes in motion. Students have to negotiate meaning, propose ideas, criticize, and discuss

the next steps. They also verbalize what the characters in the *Frozen Picture* think or do, use the ‘frozen’ character for an impromptu dialogue or as a starting point for a written exercise (homework).

### Literary Approach to the Topics of Hunger and Communication Barriers

As an introduction to working with the text, the instructor directs students’ attention toward different kinds of speaking modes and speaking attitudes:

hurt, ironic, loud, whisper, crying, upset, condescending, bored, annoyed, demanding, aggressive, moody

The instructor asks students for their input on the choice of vocabulary to describe different ways of speaking and writes them on the board for the next step.

#### *Text Snippets and Speaking Modes*

For this exercise, the instructor chooses prominent passages from the text *Das Brot*, copies them onto cardboard, and cuts them out for distribution in class (Appendix B). It is important to have one text snippet for each student. Students are asked to form a circle and take turns to read their text snippets aloud. At this time, the instructor answers word comprehension questions and gives pronunciation pointers. Participants are then asked to walk through the classroom without looking at other students, while reading their part aloud and trying out different speaking modes (see above). In the second step, students work in pairs and engage in a conversation by reading their individual parts. Their partners answer in a corresponding tone of voice while reading their own text snippets. This step can be repeated. By the end of this portion of the exercise, students should have memorized their text snippet.

Finally, students form a circle, and a chair is placed in the middle of the circle. One student sits in the chair and recites the text snippet in a ‘neutral’ speaking mode. Another student repeats the sentence in a different tone of voice (ironic, loud, whisper, condescending, demanding, annoyed, etc.) while walking toward the person sitting in the chair and taking the place of the first student. This step is repeated: it is now the second student’s turn to read the text, and yet another person takes the chair. This exercise creates an emotional atmosphere and opens the door to further exercises like the *Hot Seat* and *Running the Gauntlet* (see below).

#### *Working with the Text of Das Brot*

The teacher distributes the first two paragraphs of the short story, and the students read the text silently. Then the teacher asks leading questions using the question words who, what, when, where, why, and how, and the *Imperfekt*.<sup>2</sup> The students are split into groups of two or three (the husband, the wife, and the director) to develop *Frozen Pictures* using the context of the first two paragraphs. Then the *Frozen Pictures* come alive when the students develop the scenes into mini-dialogues (1-3 sentences per person). *Frozen Pictures* are especially suitable as a starting point because they can represent the awkward moments of tension

between the husband and the wife or visualize abstract concepts, such as jealousy, greed, love, fear, and concern. Students continue reading using this technique for the rest of the text.

#### *Rollenbiographie* [Character Fact Sheet]

Writing a *Rollenbiographie* allows students to have an even more personal approach to the story and its characters (Appendix C). In order to empathize with one of the two characters of the story and to understand their life circumstances, environment, longings, strengths, and shortcomings, students write a *Rollenbiographie* using the first person singular. They start out with what they can extract from the text. For example, the text states that the husband is 63 and thinks his wife looks old. Students also know that the wife is organized and follows a routine, and the apartment is cold. What they do not know is personal information: likes and dislikes, hobbies, and the socio-political and family background. The instructor needs to customize the questions depending on the level of the learners. Please see the appendix for a possible *Rollenbiographie* suitable for this and other texts. This exercise can be assigned as homework and discussed the next day, or students complete it in class. This exercise is followed by the *Hot Seat* (see below).

#### *The Hot Seat*

By now, students are very familiar with the characters of the story. In the following exercise one student takes the *Hot Seat* in the middle of the classroom portraying either the wife or the husband of the story, while other students sit in a circle and ask questions. The student in the *Hot Seat* has to stay in character and answer each question on behalf of the husband or the wife in the story. According to Even (2009, p. 1), “the unique dynamics of this activity stem from the need for, and power of spontaneous invention, to which everybody contributes.” The student on the *Hot Seat* has to make spontaneous decisions concerning the character and answer questions on the spot. The follow-up questions depend on the answers.

#### *Running the Gauntlet (Thought Avenue)*

In *Running the Gauntlet*, the wife from the short story *Das Brot* has to decide if she is going to confront the husband or not. The instructor poses the question: “Should the wife confront the husband accusing him of eating the last piece of bread while she is hungry herself?” The instructor divides students into two groups. Group A collects arguments for, and group B collects arguments against confronting the husband. This exercise works best if students write the arguments down and discuss them in their groups before they line up for the actual *Running the Gauntlet*.

Each group of students forms a line, and students stand in their respective groups so that each faces a member of the other group, thus forming a *Thought Avenue*. One student volunteers as the wife. While the ‘wife’ walks through the *Thought Avenue*, both groups simultaneously and randomly shout their arguments at the volunteer in an attempt to influence her decision. This exercise is designed to



change her perspective as a result of emotional and direct experience, as opposed to the 'outside' analytic approach. By the end of her walk, the conflict needs to be resolved and the 'wife' has to make her decision. Because arguments are not presented in an orderly fashion, the instructor needs to discuss in advance the possibility of being overwhelmed by the intensity of the experience.

### **Reflection**

A reflection at the end of the class allows students to view these activities as actual learning experiences and not 'just fun'. Reflecting on the activities brings the class back together. It gives teachers the opportunity to reinforce topics covered in the unit and ask students what they think they have learned. It is not necessary to reflect after each assignment. Depending on the time constraints and the level of the class, teachers may choose to assign a reflective journal entry, a short dialogue, or other homework assignments.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Drama, like foreign languages, deals with communication. Dramatic practice allows students to communicate and understand others in a new light. Dramatic play also provides training in the practical aspects of communication, which is vital for today's information-centered global society. The implementation of drama pedagogy in the second language classroom has a wide range of benefits for the millennial students who are interested in the unique, intrigued by interactivity, love mobility, and need stimulation (Bonfardine, 2005). Through careful preparation which involves written and oral texts, the teacher may add incidental conversation pieces to students' active vocabulary to expand its range. Furthermore, as Susanne Even suggests, the "kinesthetic, social, and empathic learning moments make for intensive and lasting experiences with the foreign language, literature, and culture" (Even, 2008, p. 162).

In addition, role-play can ease the language learning process and help overcome possible inhibitions. Taking on a role can be a motivating factor for students to participate in a class discussion. Finally, skits give teachers a chance to model specific situations and grammatical structures and check students' understanding. Dramatic dialogues bring these additional benefits to the classroom:

- Focus on particular pronunciation (start with tongue twisters)
- Introduce and practice grammar points through grammar-loaded dialogues
- Teach students to express mood and emotion
- Demonstrate how people in the target language display emotion through changes of intonation, stress, and pace of speech
- Analyze literary texts
- Negotiate language through body language
- Develop concentration and group dynamics
- Help students find their own voice
- Build students' confidence.

Drama pedagogy was new to the students enrolled in the author's German classes. Some wholeheartedly embraced it from the beginning, while others were more skeptical since they felt pushed out of their comfort zone. Some might argue that drama seems to be best suited for younger students who have vivid imaginations and lack the self-consciousness of many college students. However, given the right warm-up exercises and introduction, drama can be for all ages. Once the author's students became familiar with drama pedagogy, they realized how beneficial and enjoyable this learning method could be. After analyzing texts, pictures, and films appropriate to the topic, students in the author's classes were able to stage and reflect on complex historical topics, such as life in postwar Germany, through dramatic play.

### Endnotes

1. For instance, this exercise works well to reinforce the subjunctive. While student A passes the imaginary object, student B might say: *Du gibst mir das, als wäre es eine Zahnbürste* [You are handing me this as if it were a toothbrush.]
2. For more on grammar and drama exercises see Even (2003).

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### **Suggested Further Readings**

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## Appendix A

### Selected Excerpts from Wolfgang Borchert (1946): *Das Brot* [The Bread]

*Auf dem Küchentisch stand der Brotteller. Sie sah, daß er sich Brot abgeschnitten hatte. Das Messer lag noch neben dem Teller. Und auf der Decke lagen Brotkrümel. Wenn sie abends zu Bett gingen, machte sie immer das Tischtuch sauber. Jeden Abend. Aber nun lagen Krümel auf dem Tuch. Und das Messer lag da.*

...

*Und sie sah von dem Teller weg. „Ich dachte, hier wär was“, sagte er und sah in der Küche umher. „Ich habe auch was gehört“, antwortete sie, und dabei fand sie, daß er nachts im Hemd doch schon recht alt aussah. So alt wie er war. Dreiundsechzig. Tagsüber sah er manchmal jünger aus. Sie sieht doch schon alt aus, dachte er, im Hemd sieht sie doch ziemlich alt aus. Aber das liegt vielleicht an den Haaren. Bei den Frauen liegt das nachts immer an den Haaren. Die machen dann auf einmal so alt. „Du hättest Schuhe anziehen sollen. So barfuß auf den kalten Fliesen. Du erkältest dich noch.“*

*Sie sah ihn nicht an, weil sie nicht ertragen konnte, daß er log. Daß er log, nachdem sie neununddreißig Jahre verheiratet waren.*

...

*„Nacht“, antwortete er und noch: „ja, kalt ist es schon ganz schön.“ Dann war es still. Nach vielen Minuten hörte sie, daß er leise und vorsichtig kaute. Sie atmete absichtlich tief und gleichmäßig, damit er nicht merken sollte, daß sie noch war. Aber sein Kauen war so regelmäßig, daß sie davon langsam einschlief.*

*Als er am nächsten Abend nach Hause kam, schob sie ihm vier Scheiben Brot hin. Sonst hatte er immer nur drei essen können. „Du kannst ruhig vier essen“, sagte sie und ging von der Lampe weg. „Ich kann dieses Brot nicht so recht vertragen. Iß du man eine mehr. Ich vertrag es nicht so gut.“*

*Sie sah, wie er sich tief über den Teller beugte. Er sah nicht auf. In diesem Augenblick tat er ihr leid. „Du kannst doch nicht nur zwei Scheiben essen“, sagte er auf seinen Teller. „Doch. Abends vertrag ich das Brot nicht gut. Iß man. Iß man.“ Erst nach einer Weile setzte sie sich unter die Lampe an den Tisch.*

### Wolfgang Borchert: *The Bread (Das Brot)*

#### Selected Excerpts from English Translation by H. Johnting (n.d.)

[The bread plate lay on the kitchen table. She saw that he had cut himself some bread. The knife was still lying beside the plate. And on the tablecloth there were breadcrumbs. When they went to bed at night she always cleaned the tablecloth. Every night. But now there were crumbs on the cloth. And the knife lay there... And she looked away from the plate.

...“I thought there was something here,” he said and looked around the kitchen.

...“I heard something, too,” she answered and at the same time she thought that he really looked pretty old already, at night in his shirt. As old as he was. Sixty-three. During the day he sometimes looked younger. “She really looks old,”

he thought, “in her shirt she looks pretty old already. But maybe that’s because of the hair. With women it’s always because of the hair at night. It makes them so old all of a sudden.”

...“You should have put on some shoes. Barefoot like that on the cold tiles. You are going to catch a cold.”

She did not look at him, because she could not bear that he lied. That he lied after they had been married for thirty-nine years.

...“Night,” he answered and added: “Yes, it is really pretty cold.”

Then it was quiet. After many minutes she heard that he was chewing quietly and carefully. She breathed deeply and evenly, on purpose, so that he would not notice that she was still awake. But his chewing was so regular that she slowly fell asleep because of it.

When he came home the next evening she pushed four slices of bread over to him. Before he had only been able to eat three. “You can go ahead and eat four;” she said and moved away from the lamp. “I cannot take this bread all that well. Go ahead and eat one more. I can’t take it all that well.”

She saw how he bent deeply over the plate. He didn’t look up. At that moment she felt sorry for him. “You can’t eat just two slices,” he said to his plate. “Sure. In the evening the bread doesn’t agree with me. Go ahead and eat! Eat!” It was only a while later that she sat down at the table under the lamp.]

## Appendix B

*In der Küche hatte jemand gegen einen Stuhl gestoßen.* [In the kitchen someone had bumped against a chair.]

*Wenn sie abends zu Bett gingen, machte sie immer das Tischtuch sauber. Jeden Abend.* [When they went to bed at night, she always cleaned the tablecloth. Every night.]

*Aber nun lagen Krümel auf dem Tuch. Und das Messer lag da.* [But now there were crumbs on the cloth. And the knife lay there.]

„*Ich dachte, hier wär was.*“ [“I thought there was something here.”]

*Ich habe auch was gehört.* [“I heard something too.”]

*Sie sieht doch schon alt aus (...) im Hemd sieht sie doch ziemlich alt aus.* [“She really looks old,” he thought, “in her shirt she looks pretty old already.”]

„Du hättest Schuhe anziehen sollen. So barfuß auf den kalten Fliesen. Du erkältest dich noch.“ [“You should have put on some shoes. Barefoot like that on the cold tiles. You are going to catch a cold.”]

Daß er log, nachdem sie neununddreißig Jahre verheiratet waren. [That he lied after they had been married for thirty nine years.]

Sie stellte den Teller vom Tisch und schnippte die Krümel von der Decke. [She took the plate off the table and flicked the crumbs off the cloth.]

„Komm man. Das war wohl draußen. Komm man zu Bett. Du erkältest dich noch. Auf den kalten Fliesen.“ [“Come on. It must have been outside. Come on to bed. You are going to catch a cold. On the cold tiles.”]

Ich muß das Licht jetzt ausmachen, sonst muß ich nach dem Teller sehen (...) ich darf doch nicht nach dem Teller sehen. [“I have to turn off the light now or else I will have to look at the plate (...). I cannot allow myself to look at the plate.”]

„Ja, ich dachte, es wär in der Küche. Es war wohl die Dachrinne.“ [“Yes, it must have been outside then. I thought it was here.”]

„Es ist kalt (...) ich krieche unter die Decke. Gute Nacht.“ [“It is cold (...). I’m crawling under the blanket. Good night.”]

„Nacht“ [“Night.”]

„Du kannst ruhig vier essen.“ [“You can go ahead and eat four.”]

„Ich kann dieses Brot nicht so recht vertragen. Iß du man eine mehr. Ich vertrage es nicht so gut.“ [“I cannot take this bread all that well. Go ahead and eat one more. I can’t take it all that well.”]

„Du kannst doch nicht nur zwei Scheiben essen.“ [“You can’t eat just two slices.”]

## Appendix C

**Rollenbiographie [Character Fact Sheet] for Borchert's *Das Brot* [The Bread]**

<i>Name</i> [Name]	
<i>Alter</i> [Age]	
<i>Ort</i> [Location]	
<b>Familienhintergrund</b> [Family background]	
<i>Vergangenheit</i> [Past]	
<i>Herkunft</i> [Origin]	
<i>Freunde</i> [Friends]	
<i>Feinde</i> [Enemies]	
<b>Charaktereigenschaften</b> [Character traits]	
<i>Schmerzen, Sorgen, Tiefpunkte im Leben</i> [Pains, Sorrows, low points]	
<i>Schwächen</i> [Weaknesses]	
<i>Höhepunkte</i> [Highlights]	
<i>Stärken</i> [Strengths]	
<i>Ziele, Wünsche, Sehnsüchte</i> [Goals, wishes, longings]	
<b>Interessenkonflikte, Konflikte mit der Welt und anderen Menschen</b> [Conflicts of interest conflicts with the outside world, other people,]	
<i>Krisen</i> [Possible crises]	
<i>Krisenlösung</i> [Possible crisis resolution]	
<b>Vorlieben und Abneigungen</b> [Likes and dislikes]	





# 5

## Why Students Choose a Language and How to Interest Them

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### Introduction

This article examines recent data gathered from 250 upper-level high school French students and 100 college French students at all levels. Students' answers to survey questions shed light on their motivation for choosing to study French rather than a language perceived as more pragmatic in the 21<sup>st</sup> century United States. This information can help teachers develop curriculum that honors students' choices while exposing them to the practical applications of French in today's globally connected society. Because polled students value classroom interactions that lead to linguistic proficiency, the authors have included ideas for a variety of stimulating class activities incorporating twenty-first century technology and media that appeal to computer-savvy students, as well as sample exercises in the addenda. These activities can be adapted for all levels to meet specific student needs and interests. In addition, thematic exercises encourage students to reflect upon actions they can take to become global citizens of the new millennium with enhanced cultural sensitivity, intellectual openness, and a shared responsibility for their planet.

The aim of this research is not to pit one language against another but to better understand the students' reasons for studying French. When deciding which language to study, students and their parents are often guided by a barrage

of media propaganda that pushes the language *du jour* [of the day] as a better choice for students for a variety of reasons, particularly economic. The authors' hypothesis is that high school students who are taking higher levels of language beyond the required two years and college students who opt to take French are doing so because of reasons that go beyond the practical notions of utility and future professional advancement. Indeed, the personal response questions from high school students in upper-level French classes (French 3, 4, 5, 6, and AP) indicate that their choice of advanced, non-required French studies has little to do with current conceptions of economic usefulness, but is connected to cultural and intellectual curiosity, family heritage, travel aspirations, and an appreciation for the beauty of the language.

Since the publication of *The Standards for Foreign Language Learning* in 1996 (National Standards for Foreign Language Education), foreign language teachers have made great strides toward incorporating the 5 Cs into every lesson and integrating skills into holistic approaches rather than teaching them in separate units. "The work on proficiency during the past two decades placed the profession in an excellent position to define what students should know and be able to do with a foreign language they learn" (Glisan & Shrum, 2000, p. 29). In a standards-based classroom, the instructors need detailed information about the learners' individual linguistic and professional goals to complement what they should know with what they want to achieve. By periodically polling or interviewing students about their interests and career goals, teachers can create a classroom in which content-based instruction becomes highly personalized and meaningful, which is especially important for the twenty-first century generation of language learners. The teacher can use this information to create "spaces where students can draw upon the funds of knowledge, linguistic resources, and life experiences they bring with them to classroom contexts, engage with others in critical curricular opportunities and learn together so that schooling isn't about moving from one world to another but about transforming worlds through shared, complex journeys" (Van Sluys & Reinier, 2006, p. 322). The addendum of Alice Omaggio's most recent edition of *Teaching Language in Context* includes a section on *Increasing Focus on Students' Interests* with ideas for personalizing instruction. She suggests "... asking students for their input and involving them in shaping instruction. This can be accomplished on the first day of class by having students fill out the information sheet about their backgrounds and interests in second-language learning" (2000, p. 464). In her book *Learner Centered Teaching*, Maryellen Weimer (2002) develops this notion by citing scholars who characterize the teacher as a guide, a coach, a maestro, or a midwife who facilitates learning by engaging learners rather than being at the center of the classroom delivering information. The methods section of this paper includes samples of the Omaggio-inspired survey distributed to college students and another survey given to high school students visiting campus. The compiled answers serve as a basis for familiarizing the instructors with the student body, determining general trends, and planning specific course content.

## Methods

### *High School Participants*

Over 250 upper-level high school French students (levels 3–6 and AP) participated in the survey, which was taken as part of their registration for three different French Immersion Days (2008, 2009, and 2010) held at Wright State university in early November as part of the National French Week activities. In addition to signing the pledge to speak only French during the entire event, students were required to answer the following questions in French:

1. *Avez-vous voyagé dans un pays francophone? Si oui, lequel? Parlez un peu de votre séjour.* [Have you ever traveled to a French-speaking country? If so, which? Describe your trip.]
2. *Voudriez-vous voyager dans un pays francophone? Si oui, lequel et pourquoi?* [Would you like to travel to a French-speaking country? If so, which one and why?]
3. *Pourquoi étudiez-vous le français (3 raisons)?* [Why are you studying French (3 reasons)?]

### *Rationale*

The non-threatening nature of the first two questions allows for simple evaluation of written communication and gives basic information about student experience or desired experience in the target culture. The third question is designed to make students think about the importance of French to them. The high school teachers were instructed to let the students work out the answers on their own, so that the college instructors could tailor their activities to student affinities.

### *High School Trends and Dominant Ideas*

***Previous Travel Experience:*** “*Have you ever traveled to a French-speaking country? If so, which? Describe your trip.*” (Appendix A, Figure 1)

Forty-five percent of the high school students surveyed had traveled to a Francophone country. Of this group, about half of the students specified the context of their travel: 22% traveled with their high school class; 19% traveled with their family; 8% participated in an exchange or a family stay; and 3% have family in a Francophone country and traveled to see them. Of the 55% who had not traveled, all but 5% expressed the desire to do so in the future.

***Desired Future Travel:*** “*Would you like to travel to a French-speaking country? If so, which one and why?*” (Appendix A, Figures 2 and 3)

The overwhelming majority of students wanted to travel to France in the future — 69%. Several students listed more than one country (which accounts for the total percentage being greater than 100). The rest of the Francophone

countries were grouped very closely under 10%: Canada, 8%; African countries, 7% (Algeria, Madagascar, Mali, and Morocco were specified, but most students used the name of the continent); Belgium, 5%; Switzerland, 4%; Haiti, 2%; and Tahiti and Luxembourg 1% each. Thirty-nine percent did not specify a country or continent.

The reasons students gave for traveling to these Francophone countries were of a specific (“to see the Eiffel Tower”) or general (“it’s interesting”) nature. Since the students were asked to write their answers in French, this language factor may have limited their ability to be specific; in fact, more of the French 3 students used general language, such as “because France is beautiful” than did the French 4, 5, 6 and AP students. The comments fell into the following categories: (1) cultural, (2) aesthetic, (3) linguistic, (4) experiential, and (5) historical.

(1) Love of the French culture was most often cited with 13% of students indicating this reason, and several specifying that they wanted to *study* the culture or *learn* about it (emphasis added). (2) Twelve percent cited aesthetic reasons: “France is a beautiful country.” One student wanted to travel to France because it is “so clean.” Paris was high on the list - 6% mentioned Paris specifically for its museums, because it is the “capital of Europe,” and to see the Eiffel Tower (5%). (3) Many students listed linguistic reasons for wanting to travel to a French-speaking country. Ten percent said they loved the French language, wanted to improve their French, wanted to speak it with French-speaking people, or study at a French university. Put very simply, one said, “...because French is incredible.” (4) The experiential element was very important to the students, and they gave many different ways they wanted to experience France: their love of travel, 5%; an interest in French food, 4%; to have fun, such as go to the amusement parks, 4%. Two percent of the students had friends or family connections in France. For one student, visiting a former exchange student was the most important reason to go to France. Two percent of students listed their good experience in France as one of the reasons for wanting to go back. This favorable impression came from the place as well as the people. As one student wrote, “[I] like the people and the waiters.” Another student summed up his experience simply and touchingly: “My exchange to France was the best experience of my life.” The following experiential reasons were listed by one to three students each: shopping, fashion, to attract women, to see firsthand what had been talked about in class, and to see how France is different from the U.S. (5) French history was also mentioned as a drawing card, though not as much as might be expected, without any specifics. Two percent of students stated that they liked the history or wanted to visit historical places.

Nearly all of the students who listed travel to other French-speaking countries gave specific reasons for wanting to visit a Francophone country other than France. Belgium was listed upon recommendation of other people (a parent, a teacher, and a friend). Students who were interested in humanitarian service listed Haiti or Africa. Africa pulled in other reasons as well, from sports to culture, from its natural beauty to visiting family. For Canada, sports received equal billing along with the culture and discovery of the cities of Quebec and Montreal. For Martinique, Switzerland, and Tahiti, their natural beauty and related activities

provided the draw: Martinique's beaches and warmth, Switzerland's skiing and spectacular outdoors, and Tahiti's beautiful ocean.

**Current Situation: "Why are you studying French (3 reasons)?"** (Appendix A, Figure 4)

The majority of high school students chose the French language with their heart, with 54% of them giving reasons that contain some variation of "like," "really like," and "love." Out of the 256 reasons for studying French, 60% of those reasons were of the affective order. Overall, the answers to this question corresponded closely to the reasons students gave for wanting to travel to a French-speaking country. The language itself was cited, 69%; the general positive stimulation in the classroom, 62% (it's interesting, fun, easy, a challenge, great teacher); travel to a Francophone country, 46%; the broad spectrum of culture, 46% (culture, food, fashion, history, music); family heritage and connection, 18%; friend connection, 2% (visiting them, in class with them). Useful linguistic applications came in much lower: career opportunities, 16%; and facilitating college admission and success, 5%. Three percent of responses included one of the two negative reasons for studying French: "Don't want to study Spanish," or "My parents made me." Very few students (2%) highlighted the comparative nature of language study. "It helps me understand English," while two students said emphatically, "It's the only language choice for me!"

Other miscellaneous but interesting reasons included: "It's romantic," "It's my secret language," "I want a French boyfriend," "I want a French girlfriend," "French boys are cute," "Want to do mission work," "international affairs," "good for business," "love French art, Godard, Truffaut, Hugo," "Madeline books," "Phantom of the Opera," "*Je veux être très intelligente*" [I want to be very intelligent], "Makes me complete," and "I love learning more about the world."

#### *College Participants*

All of the instructors' college students take a survey at the beginning of each of their French classes. Given the repeating patterns, the authors have limited their research to include 100 survey results from the college students (40 from first-year elementary French students, 30 from intermediate-level students, and 30 from advanced-level students). Questions were administered in English at the elementary level and in French at the intermediate and advanced levels. The following questions were asked:

1. *Pourquoi avez-vous décidé de suivre ce cours?* [Why did you decide to take this French course?]
2. *Comment est-ce que le français va vous aider (personnellement et professionnellement) à l'avenir?* [How do you think your knowledge of French will benefit you (personally and professionally) in the future?]
3. *Qu'est-ce que vous faites pour vous amuser ? Avez-vous des passe-temps?* [What do you do for fun? What are your hobbies and interests?]

*Rationale*

The first question gauges student interest and to pinpoint those students who are taking French purely to fulfill a requirement, who may feel resentment for this very reason. In addition, their reasons for taking French allow the authors to develop concrete applications in the classroom by appealing to students' interests and breaking down affective filters. The second question encourages students to think about positive aspects of learning a foreign language. It is phrased in positive terms in order to open students' minds to many benefits of learning French. The third question helps the instructors personalize lessons and presentations by appealing to students' non-academic interests.

*College Trends and Dominant Ideas*

**Current Situation:** *“Why did you decide to take this course?”* (Appendix A, Figure 5)

Answers to this question indicate that college students had more sophisticated and specific reasons for studying French than high school students. Nonetheless, the most cited reason for taking French in college was on the affective level - 49% of the students surveyed say that they loved, liked, enjoyed, or were interested in French (including its culture, language, sound of the language, geographical locations, poetry, film, history, and literature). Of these students, 32% gave only this reason for choosing French. From all responses, 68% of the students cited pragmatic reasons: about 40% said they were taking French because it was a requirement (either for general education, their major, or their minor. Students in International Studies or Political Science, for example, can choose to take a language to meet requirements for their major; students in International Business as well as French majors and minors are required to acquire language skills at the advanced level). Only 1% of students listed any kind of job advantage. About 1% of students listed a) family background (French-Canadian grandparents), b) reaction against other languages (hated “x” language), c) convenience/path of least resistance (“Fit into my schedule”).

**Future benefit:** *“How will French help you in your future personal or professional life?”* (Appendix A, Figure 6)

In terms of future benefits of studying French, students indicated they would have a fairly high level of competence in the language. Fifty-one percent thought that learning French would help them professionally. Thirteen percent specifically stated that they expected to get a better job, a job in their desired field, earn a significantly higher salary, or be more competitive in the job market. Eleven percent planned to become a French teacher. An additional 21% had other language-related careers in mind. The careers listed were in the areas of health, business, library science, museum curating, interpreting, translating, fashion merchandising, working at the UN, teaching English abroad, and international business. Specific comments included: “I’m looking at pursuing a degree in Public Health with an emphasis on Global Health Systems,” “Additional languages are

always helpful in the business world,” “French will give me the edge in Museum and Library Sciences and archive work,” “It will help me understand more about fashion merchandising,” “Hopefully, I will become fluent and will either be able to work for the U.N. or teach abroad,” “I’d like to teach English in a French-speaking country,” “I’d like to do missionary work in Africa,” “I want to join the Peace Corps and go to a French-speaking country in Africa,” “Most saxophone repertoire is French, and it will help my teaching. [I will be able to] communicate with other musicians,” “I would like to write music in French,” “It will help me in grad school,” “After college, I plan on joining the Air Force, so it might help knowing a language. That way I can deal with foreign policy, which I think would be cool,” “It will help me get a job as a translator,” “I want to go into International Law, and knowing a different language will help,” “I want to work one day at the American Embassy in Paris.”

The reasons given for future personal benefit varied from a desire to connect with the world to being purely self-focused in nature. Thirty-three percent planned to travel to a French or Francophone country and intended to use the language there. Other personal reasons included understanding grandparents, charming a fiancé, watching movies in the original language, speaking with French friends, becoming more open minded, singing in French, French cave exploration, and “French will make me more interesting.” One student expressed simply, “I love French; it makes me happy.”

#### *Comparing high school and college students’ responses*

Both high school and college students showed appreciation for the traditional assets of the French language and culture, combined with a desire to achieve proficiency and to travel. On the other hand, a very small percentage of both groups seemed aware of or interested in the Francophone Diaspora and the diversity of its cultures. High school classes tended to share impressions and answered questions in a similar fashion, indicating their particular teacher’s influence on their perceptions. In one group of high school surveys, students repeatedly mentioned their desire to visit Belgium, where their teacher had connections. On the other hand, surveyed college students seemed more aware of the professional benefits of taking French than their high school counterparts. However, it should be noted that the survey questions answered by college students were more pointed than those asked of the high school students. College students were much more specific in their discussion of how their career goals tied in with French and dealt with their relative progress toward a career and their writing proficiency in the target language.

### **Recommendations and Applications**

Because students’ first and overwhelming reason for taking French was their desire to travel to French-speaking countries, the authors suggest including the following types of student-centered activities in instruction:

1. assign PowerPoint presentations on Francophone travel destinations,
2. develop virtual voyages where students research prices and schedules for flights, hotels, museums, points of interest, historical or natural sites, and local transportation,
3. have students create illustrated guide books,
4. using PowerPoint presentations, have students lead guided virtual tours of museums and points of interest and critique famous paintings and sculptures,
5. organize real study abroad trips with family stays, consider local sister city organizations with ties in the French-speaking world for partially subsidized trips or short-term home stays, invite organizations such as Rotary Clubs and local college study abroad offices to share study abroad opportunities with students,
6. hold competitive geography bowls,
7. virtually follow “big events”, such as Paris-Dakar auto race and the Tour de France,
8. pinpoint the locations of Doctors without Borders and other French-based charitable organizations on a world map,
9. ask partner schools to participate in a *Flat Stanley* exchange project where student-created paper dolls travel around Francophone countries, sending photos and postcards to their student creators (Flatter World, Inc., 2010),
10. hold a Francophone float competition (students decorate tissue boxes with cultural symbols from specific Francophone countries; announcers read student-created texts about countries as they pass along the parade route),
11. show documentary videos from embassies, consulates, the Peace Corps, and other international organizations,
12. set up pen pal or key pal exchanges with Francophone schools,
13. assign weekly presentations on current events in target cultures.

Given that the next most important reason the surveyed students chose to take French was a love of the language combined with an expressed desire to be able to speak it with a degree of fluency, language instruction should strive to achieve this goal. To respond to students’ stated aspiration for proficiency, all meaningful classroom communication, including simple grammar lessons, should focus on maximizing students’ exposure to the language, breaking down affective filters with constant comprehensible input, honoring what students really want, and truly believing that students are capable of reaching their goal of proficiency. “The focus in language education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is no longer on grammar, memorization and learning from rote, but rather using language and cultural knowledge as a means to communicate and connect to others around the globe” (Eaton, 2010, p. 5).

Students develop proficiency through heavy emphasis on interaction and other forms of oral practice. Twenty-first century realities, such as geographic mobility and ease of technology-assisted communication, will continue to expand the opportunity for teachers to use “diverse cultural and linguistic resources and multiple ways of knowing [that will] contribute to students becoming active, critical decision makers and community members” (Van Sluys & Reinier, 2006,



p. 323). The following suggestions have been gathered from multiple sources and modified to encourage natural communication. These suggestions aim to stimulate conversation involving target vocabulary and grammar:

1. interviews,
2. *Find a Person Who* activities in which students seek signatures of other students fulfilling certain requirements (see Appendix B, #6),
3. charades,
4. debates,
5. trivia games,
6. group essays,
7. *Telephone* game, in which one student whispers a sentence to another, and so on, until the last student writes the sentence on the board,
8. *Simon Says* in groups of five,
9. *Pictionary*,
10. card games such as *Le Jeu des sept familles* [*The Seven Families* game] or *Go Fish*,
11. sentence jigs in which each member of a group gets a single word, and students have to piece the sentence together,
12. computer chats with other schools,
13. class presentations on cultural topics, current events, or target vocabulary,
14. class polls (students go around the room finding out what other students eat for breakfast, for instance, and tabulate the results, see Appendix B, #1).

Some teachers may want to explore appropriate technology tools for processing surveys such as *SurveyMonkey* (2010) or *Poll Everywhere* (n.d.), and use these platforms to enhance student interaction.

One of the obvious advantages of including a variety of interactive communicative activities such as suggested above in each day's lesson plan is that they respond to the "fun" factor by keeping students active and engaged while keeping performance anxiety at bay. Rather than waiting to be called on by the teacher, the students are responsible to one another, while the teacher gives advice and guides the gentle error correction.

"Fun" and culture often go hand-in-hand, which is why lesson plans should include both high and low culture taught in many formats: games (including PowerPoint-based *Jeopardy*, and *Family Feud*), videos, songs with lyrics, new technology (podcasts, *Facebook* interest groups, cell phone polling, *iMovie* or *Moviemaker* for short student authored films), interactive web sites, computer games on textbook CDs and accompanying websites. Additional resources include five-minute skits on a cultural topic, real and virtual treasure hunts, *20 questions* (where students guess secret, celebrity identities by asking yes/no questions), and other friendly target language competitions. Of particular interest is *Tecktonik* (n.d.), a frenetic street dance created in 2002 and very popular with students. There are many YouTube.com videos of target language flash mob performances, a new global phenomenon in which a large group of people prearrange to assemble in public and put on a surprise show (Dictionary.com, 2010).

## Conclusion

The data examined from upper-level high school and college French students indicates that students who choose to study French do so based on predominantly affective and personal criteria. Their reported responses reveal enthusiasm, intellectual curiosity, and a deep connection to the subject.

In the broader debate about 21<sup>st</sup> century educational reform, student choice and student voice may have been sidelined in the last few years of *No Child Left Behind* and *Race to the Top*, with the increase of demands and the required hours in core courses (mathematics, science, English, and social studies). In some cases, foreign language courses comprise only one choice of many electives in the humanities for a standard high school diploma. The Ohio Core Curriculum (2009), for instance, requires that students graduating in and after 2014 take four courses in both mathematics and English, and three courses in each science and social studies, with foreign language courses included among elective offerings.

With the focus on the core subjects, the role of world languages and cultures in modern-day domestic and international economies should not be underestimated. “Globalization has brought multiculturalism to every nation.... Statistics show that the motivation of learning a second language is far more than academic study and the need to work” (Yang, 2010, p. 79). Therefore, students’ needs must be considered and “kept at the heart of language learning and education” (Eaton, 2010, p. 6). It is important to give students a voice and to ensure that they take ownership in their education with an eye to their future profession and their contribution to society. The authors’ findings show that students have personal reasons for taking a foreign language that go beyond utilitarian motives and perceptions. The educational requirements should respond to the diversity of students’ talents and interests, including a focus on global competency training in language classes and creative skills that can only be developed through the arts. “Students today want to learn a language not only to communicate, but also as a means to find contacts, meet people and establish partnerships...not only to become self-empowered but also to empower others” (Eaton, 2010, p. 15).

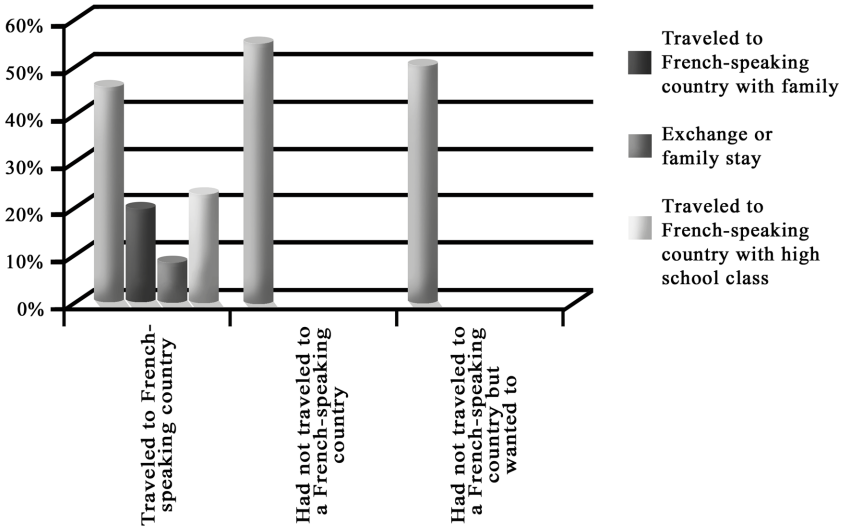
By valuing the utility and appeal of foreign language study, the dominant cultural message is transformed into one that recognizes differing individual strengths, encourages the development of independent thinking, and increases international options with a fundamental appreciation for global diversity. The language classroom becomes a place where students “can take risks, approximate, and draw upon diverse resources to negotiate and contest meanings and take action to create a better world” (Van Sluys & Reinier, 2006, p. 327). As students use their language and cultural skills to connect with others around the globe, they transcend geographical and physical boundaries.

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**Appendix A**

**Figure 1.** Previous travel experience: Have you ever traveled to a French-speaking country? (High school)



**Figure 2.** Desired future travel: Would you like to travel to a French-speaking country? (High school)

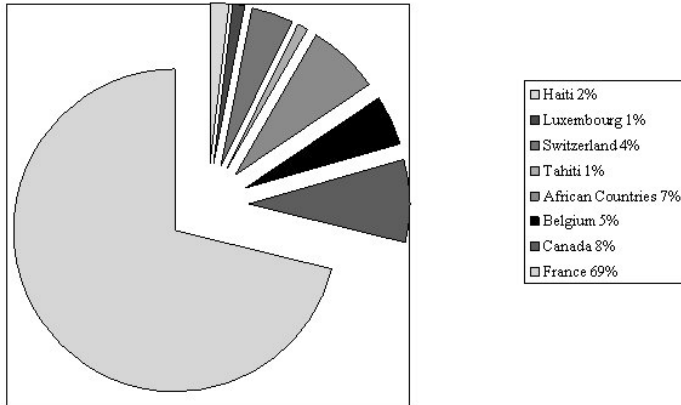
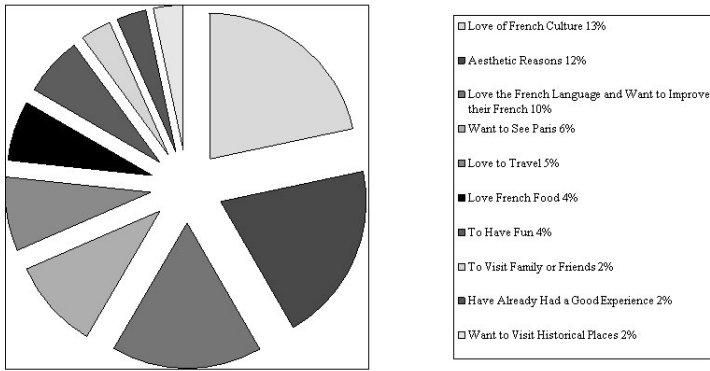


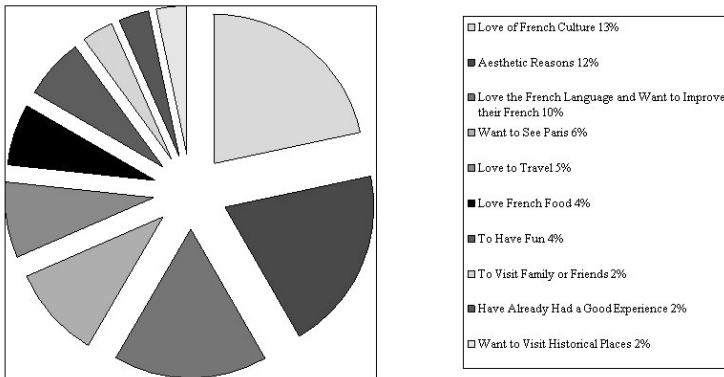
Chart begins with Haiti at top and continues in clockwise direction.

Note: 39% of students did not specify a country or continent. Some students listed more than one country, which contributes to the percentage being more than 100%.

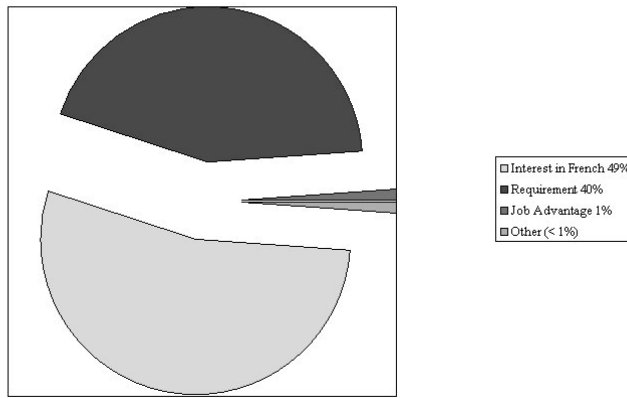
**Figure 3.** Reasons for traveling to Francophone countries (High school)



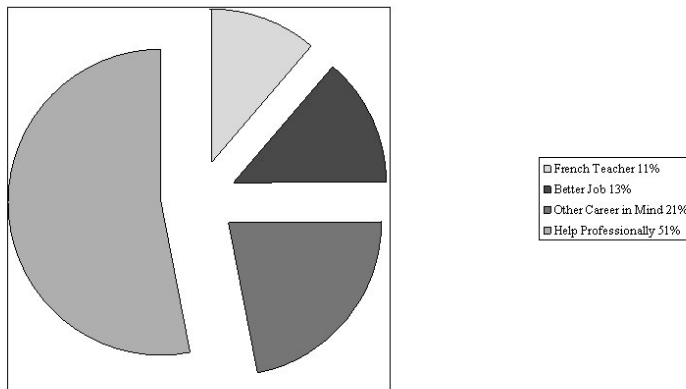
**Figure 4.** Current Situation: Why are you studying French? (High school)



**Figure 5.** Current Situation: Why did you decide to take this course? (College)



**Figure 6.** Future benefit: How will French help you in your future personal or professional life? (College)



## Appendix B

### I. Class Opinion Poll

SONDAGE [OPINION POLL]

Nom [Name]: \_\_\_\_\_

*Indique tes préférences. Ensuite pose les questions à plusieurs camarades de classe. Compare vos réponses.*

[Indicate your preferences. Then ask these questions to several classmates. Compare your answers.]

*Qu'est-ce que tu aimes?* [What do you like?]

*Qu'est-ce que tu n'aimes pas?* [What don't you like?]

*Qu'est-ce que tu préfères?* [What do you prefer?]

*Qu'est-ce que tu voudrais faire ce week-end?* [What would you like to do this weekend?]

<i>Qui et Quoi</i> [Who and What]	<i>J'aime beaucoup</i> [I really like]	<i>Je n'aime pas</i> [I don't like]	<i>Je préfère</i> [I prefer]	
<i>les professeurs</i> [the teachers]				
<i>le campus</i> [the campus]				
<i>les devoirs</i> [the homework]				
<i>le sport</i> [sports]				
<i>les fêtes</i> [parties]				
<i>l'histoire</i> [history]				
<i>l'anglais</i> [English]				
<i>le français</i> [French]				
<i>la biologie</i> [biology]				
<i>les maths</i> [math]				
<i>le marketing</i> [marketing]				
				<i>Ce week-end je voudrais</i> [This week-end I would like]
<i>faire du sport</i> [to play sports]				
<i>dîner au restaurant</i> [to eat in a restaurant]				
<i>surfer le Net</i> [to surf the Web]				
<i>écrire des mails</i> [to write emails]				
<i>Lire</i> [to read]				

<i>parler au téléphone</i> [to talk on the phone]				
<i>faire de l'exercice</i> [to get some exercise]				
<i>jouer de la guitare</i> [to play the guitar]				
<i>bricoler</i> [to putter]				

## II. Bingo

LOTO [BINGO]

Nom [Name]: \_\_\_\_\_

*Pose les questions suivantes à tes camarades de classe. Crie LOTO quand tu remplis 5 carrés (squares) en une ligne horizontale, verticale ou diagonale. Une question par camarade, s.t.p.!*

[Ask your classmates the following questions. Yell Bingo when you have completed 5 squares horizontally, vertically, or diagonally. Only one signature per person, please!]

Ex: *Est-ce que tu aimes le français?* [Do you like French?]

***Oui, j'aime le français.*** [Yes, I like French.]

*Signe ici, s'il te plaît.* [Sign here, please.]

***Est-ce que tu ... [Do you ...]***

<i>... travailles pour l'université?</i> [work for the university?]	<i>... regardes souvent le football américain à la télé?</i> [often watch football on TV?]	<i>... parles beaucoup en classe?</i> [talk a lot in class?]	<i>... manges quelquefois des steaks?</i> [eat steak sometimes?]	<i>... écoutes souvent la musique alternative?</i> [listen to alternative music?]
<i>... aimes étudier les langues?</i> [like to study languages?]	<i>... étudies la biologie?</i> [study biology?]	<i>... habites à Fairborn?</i> [live in Fairborn?]	<i>... joues souvent du piano?</i> [often play piano?]	<i>... manges quelque chose le matin?</i> [eat something in the morning?]



... invites souvent tes amis à la mai- son? [often invite your friends over?]	... joues assez bien au foot? [play soc- cer pretty well?]	<b>;;LIBRE !!</b> [;;FREE!!]	... aimes beaucoup les soirées? [really like parties?]	...étudies rare- ment à la biblio- thèque? [rarely study at the library?]
...joues assez bien de la guitare? [play guitar fairly well?]	...aimes regarder les matches de tennis? [like to watch ten- nis matches?]	... le samedi, est- ce que tu passes presque toute la matinée à la maison? [spend nearly all of Saturday morning at home?]	... tu habites dans un appartement? [live in an apart- ment?]	...nages quelque- fois? [swim some- times?]
...préfères le foot- ball américain au football européen? [prefer football or soccer?]	...chantes assez mal? [sing poorly?]	... regardes rarement les films étrangers? [rarely watch foreign films?]	...restes souvent à la maison le samedi soir? [often stay at home Saturday night?]	... aimes faire du sport? [like to play sports?]

III. **Question Bingo:** Students are divided into groups of five. One student is the caller and reads out questions, and other students in the group circle possible answers, practicing the difficult concept of question asking in French. This also makes students responsible to each other rather than to the professor.

QUESTIONS ET RÉPONSES [QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS]

Nom [Name]: \_\_\_\_\_

*Loto: Regardez les réponses ci-dessous. Ensuite, écoutez la question posée par votre camarade. Encercler la réponse qui répond à la question. Criez LOTO pour 4 réponses horizontales, diagonales ou verticales.*

[Bingo: Look at the answers below. Then listen to the question your partner asks you. Circle the answer to the question. Yell BINGO when you have 4 answers in a horizontal, vertical, or diagonal row.]

Ça va <b>bien</b> , merci. [I'm <b>fine</b> , thank you.]	Je m'appelle <b>Annette Clark</b> . [My name is <b>Annette Clark</b> .]	<i>Il est 5 heures.</i> [It is <b>5 o'clock</b> .]	<i>Aujourd'hui, c'est <b>lundi</b>.</i> [Today is <b>Mon- day</b> .]
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<i>C'est Yvette.</i> [That's <b>Yvette</b> .]	<i>C'est un parc.</i> [It's a <b>park</b> .]	<i>David est très sympa.</i> [David is <b>very nice</b> .]	<i>Annette est à la maison.</i> [Annette is at <b>home</b> .]
<i>Yvette aime la musique.</i> [Yvette likes <b>music</b> .]	<i>Thomas travaille toute la journée.</i> [Thomas works <b>all day</b> .]	<i>David aime sortir avec Annette.</i> [David likes to go out <b>with Annette</b> .]	<i>Je rentre à une heure.</i> [I go home at <b>1 o'clock</b> .]
<i>Annette et David étudient les maths.</i> [ <b>Annette and David</b> are studying math.]	<i>Nous préférons aller au cinéma.</i> [We prefer <b>to go to the movies</b> .]	<i>Parce que la prof est très intéressante.</i> [ <b>Because the teacher is really interesting</b> .]	<i>Annette parle bien français.</i> [Annette speaks French <b>well</b> .]

## IV. Student-to-student interview about television viewing habits

LA TÉLÉVISION [TELEVISION]

Nom [Name]: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewez deux partenaires pour trouver les informations suivantes:

[Interview two partners to find the following information]:

Nom [Name]:	Mme H (exemple) [Mrs. H (example)]		
<i>Est-ce que tu aimes regarder la télé?</i> [Do you like to watch TV?]	<i>Oui, mais pas trop souvent.</i> [Yes, but not too often.]		
<i>Quand est-ce que tu regardes la télé?</i> [When do you watch TV?]	<i>Le soir (quand je ne prépare pas les cours).</i> [In the evening (when I'm not preparing for class).]		
<i>Où est-ce que tu aimes regarder la télé?</i> [Where do you like to watch TV?]	<i>Chez moi, sur le divan.</i> [At home, on the sofa.]		

<p><i>Qui est ton acteur / ton actrice préféré(e)?</i> [Who is your favorite actor/actress?]</p>	<p><i>C'est Peter Sellers.</i> [Peter Sellers.]</p>		
<p><i>Comment est cet acteur/cette actrice?</i> [What is this actor/thisactress like?]</p>	<p><i>Il est très amusant et pas très beau... et il est mort.</i> [He's really funny and not very handsome... and he's dead.]</p>		
<p><i>Qu'est-ce que tu aimes regarder à la télé?</i> [What do you like to watch on TV?]</p>	<p><i>J'aime le Daily Show.</i> [I like the Daily Show.]</p>		
<p><i>Quel(s) jour(s) est ton émission de télé préférée?</i> [What day/ Which days is your favorite TV show on?]</p>	<p><i>Tous les soirs sauf le week-end (du lundi au vendredi), je pense!</i> [Every evening except theweekend (Monday to Friday), I think!]</p>		
<p><i>À quelle heure est ton émission de télé préférée?</i> [What time is your favorite TV program?]</p>	<p><i>À onze heures.</i> [At 11 o'clock.]</p>		
<p><i>Pourquoi est-ce que tu aimes cette émission?</i> [Why do you like this show?]</p>	<p><i>Parce que c'est amusant et c'est très logique!</i> [Because it's funny and very logical!]</p>		
<p><i>Avec qui est-ce que tu regardes la télé?</i> [With whom do you watch TV?]</p>	<p><i>Avec mon mari, Peter (et mes deux chats et mon chien).</i> [With my husband, Peter (and my two cats and my dog).]</p>		
<p><i>Est-ce que tu manges devant la télé?</i> [Do you eat in front of the TV?]</p>	<p><i>Quelquefois... mais c'est dangereux. Je ne voudrais pas être grosse!</i> [Sometimes... but it's dangerous. I don't want to get fat!]</p>		

V. **Mad Lib exchanges** give students grammar practice in the context of a popular American game.

FOLIES IMPROMPTUES [MAD LIBS]      Noms [Names]: \_\_\_\_\_  
et [and] \_\_\_\_\_

*Partenaire #1 garde le papier, et demande au Partenaire #2 de lui donner 14 mots.*  
[Partner #1 keeps the paper and asks Partner #2 to give 14 words.]

*Partenaire #2 peut chercher des mots dans le livre, si nécessaire.*  
[Partner #2 can use the textbook, if necessary, to look for words.]

*Partenaire #1 met les mots dans les blancs. Les deux partenaires lisent l'histoire qu'ils inventent.*  
[Partner #1 puts the words in the blanks. The two partners read the story they have made up.]

*Martine déteste sa nouvelle camarade de chambre* [Martine hates her new roommate], \_\_\_\_\_, (1) *parce qu'elle est* [because she is] \_\_\_\_\_ (2) *et* [and] \_\_\_\_\_ (3). *Son copain* [her boyfriend] \_\_\_\_\_ (4) *passé toute la journée dans le* [spends the whole day in the] \_\_\_\_\_ (5), *et mange constamment toute leur* [and constantly eats all of their] \_\_\_\_\_ (6). *Elles habitent dans un* [They live in a] \_\_\_\_\_ (7) *avec* [with] \_\_\_\_\_ (8) *pièces au* [rooms on the] \_\_\_\_\_ (9) *étage d'un immeuble en* [floor of an apartment building in] \_\_\_\_\_ (10). *Le loyer est de* [The rent is] \_\_\_\_\_ (11) *dollars par mois* [dollars per month]. *Il n'y a pas de* [There isn't any] \_\_\_\_\_ (12), *mais il y a deux* [but there are two] \_\_\_\_\_ (13) *chambres* [bedrooms] \_\_\_\_\_ (14).

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. <i>nom d'une star (femme)</i><br>[name of a female movie star]                     | 9. <i>numéro ordinal</i> [ordinal number]                                  |
| 2. <i>adjectif (fém/sing)</i> [adjective (fem/sing)]                                  | 10. <i>nom (fém/sing)</i> [noun (fem/sing)]                                |
| 3. <i>adjectif (fém/sing)</i> [adjective (fem/sing)]                                  | 11. <i>numéro</i> [number]   |
| 4. <i>nom d'une star (homme)</i><br>[name of a male movie star]                       | 12. <i>nom (consonne)</i> [noun (beginning with a consonant)]              |
| 5. <i>nom (masc /sing/consonne)</i><br>[noun (masc/ sing/beginning with a consonant)] | 13. <i>adjectif (fém/pl AVANT)</i><br>[adjective (fem/pl before the noun)] |
| 6. <i>nom (fém/sing)</i> [noun (fem/sing)]  | 14. <i>adjectif (fém/pl APRÈS)</i><br>[adjective (fem/pl after the noun)]  |
| 7. <i>nom (sing)</i> [noun (sing)]  |  |
| 8. <i>numéro</i> [number]   |  |

VI. **Find a Person Who...** In this activity, students circulate around the classroom, trying to find other students who can respond positively to one of the questions below. Since a different signature is needed each time, students get up and move around, making this an excellent kinesthetic activity.

TROUVER UNE PERSONNE QUI [FIND A PERSON WHO]...

Nom [Names]: \_\_\_\_\_

ES-TU ÉCOLO? [Are you green...ecology-minded...an eco freak?]

**Modèle [Model]:**

Toi [You]: *Est-ce que tu as recyclé aujourd'hui?* [Have you recycled today?]

Camarade [Partner]: *Oui, j'ai recyclé une canette aujourd'hui. (Signe ici, s'il te plaît!)* [Yes, I recycled a soda can today. (Sign, please!)]

*Non, je n'ai rien recyclé. (C'est dommage !)* [No, I didn't recycle anything. (That's too bad!)]

Question: Est-ce que tu... [Question: Have you... Do you... Are you...]	Nom [Name]
...as visité une jungle? [visited a jungle?]	
...es allé(e) au Zoo de Cincinnati? [been to the Cincinnati Zoo?]	
...as déjà vu un panda? [ever seen a panda?]	

<i>...as caressé un serpent?</i> [petted a snake?]	
<i>...manges des produits biologiques?</i> [eat organic food?]	
<i>...es végétarien(ne)?</i> [vegetarian?]	
<i>...prends le bus pour aller à l'école?</i> [take the bus to go to school?]	
<i>...vas à l'école en vélo ou à pied?</i> [walk to school or take a bike?]	
<i>...éteins les lumières quand tu quittes une salle?</i> [turn the lights off when you leave a room?]	
<i>...refuses les sacs en plastique au supermarché?</i> [refuse plastic bags at the grocery store?]	
<i>...recycles les vêtements que tu ne portes plus?</i> [recycle clothes that you don't wear anymore?]	
<i>...coupes l'eau quand tu te brosses les dents?</i> [turn the water off while brushing your teeth?]	
<i>...as vu un ours?</i> [seen a bear?]	
<i>...recycles?</i> [recycle?]	

**VII. Virtual Treasure Hunt:** If this is done in a computer or language lab, students can work in pairs. To add a competitive edge, the teacher divides the students into two groups and calls out the items one at a time.

#### CHASSE AU TRÉSOR VIRTUELLE [VIRTUAL TREASURE HUNT]

- *Quel temps fait-il à Paris?* [What's the weather like in Paris?]
- *En fahrenheit* [In Fahrenheit]
- *En celcius* [In Celsius]
- *Trouver le tombeau de Jim Morrison.* [Find the grave of Jim Morrison.]
- *Quel jour le Louvre est-il fermé?* [What day is the Louvre Museum closed?]
- *Trouver un bon prix pour billet d'avion à Martinique.* [Find a good price for a plane ticket to Martinique.]
- *Trouver une photo d'un tableau qui se trouve au Musée d'Orsay.* [Find a photo of a painting in the Orsay Museum.]
- *Trouver une image du drapeau de Côte d'Ivoire.* [Find an image of the flag of Ivory Coast.]

- *Trouver une photo de la femme française de Johnny Depp.* [Find a photo of Johnny Depp's French wife.]
- *Trouver une photo d'un chanteur de rap français.* [Find a photo of a French rapper.]
- *Quelle est la date de naissance de Sophie Marceau ?* [When was the actress Sophie Marceau born?]
- *Quelles sont les dix chansons les plus populaires en France actuellement ?* [What are the 10 most popular songs playing in France currently?]
- *Quel est le film le plus populaire en France maintenant ?* [What is the most popular film in France now?]
- *Quel est un titre de la une du journal Le Monde?* [Give a title from the front page of the French newspaper *The World*.]
- *Trouver une photo d'une bonne pâtisserie française.* [Find a photo of a good French pastry.]
- *Quel temps fait-il à Dakar?* [What's the weather like in Dakar, Senegal?]
- *Il y a combien de marches dans l'Arc de Triomphe?* [How many steps are there at Triumphant Arch?]
- *Qui sont les chanteurs du groupe musical Noir Désir?* [Who are the singers in the music group Black Desire?]
- *Trouver un webcam de Paris.* [Find a webcam of Paris.]
- *Où se trouve la Statue de la Liberté à Paris?* [Where in Paris is the Statue of Liberty?]
- *Trouver l'horoscope français de Nicolas Sarkozy.* [Find the French horoscope for Nicolas Sarkozy.]
- *Quelle est la population de la Belgique?* [What is the population of Belgium?]
- *Trouver les paroles et le chanteur de la chanson Le Petit Pain au Chocolat.* [Find the lyrics to the song *The Chocolate Croissant*. What is the singer's name?]
- *Combien coûte un ticket de métro à Paris?* [How much does a subway ticket cost in Paris?]
- *Trouver le lieu où Léonardo Da Vinci est mort.* [Find the place where Leonardo De Vinci died.]
- *Trouver un article sur la controverse qui noircit la réputation du gagnant du Tour de France 2006.* [Find an article about the controversy that tarnished the reputation of the winner of the 2006 *French Bicycle Race*.]
- *Trouver le nom et la photo du premier ministre de France.* [Find the name and a picture of the Prime Minister of France.]
- *Trouver un plan du métro parisien.* [Find a Paris subway map.]
- *Un euro égale combien de dollars aujourd'hui?* [One euro equals how many dollars at today's exchange rate?]
- *Trouver un bon restaurant à la Rive gauche de Paris.* [Find a good restaurant on the Left Bank in Paris.]
- *Trouver le texte du poème Les Correspondances de Baudelaire.* [Find the text of the poem *Correspondences* by Baudelaire.]
- *Trouver une photo d'une sculpture qui se trouve au Louvre.* [Find a photo of a sculpture at the Louvre Museum.]

- *Trouver une carte d'anniversaire en français.* [Find a French birthday card.]
- *Trouver une photo de l'intérieur des Galeries Lafayette à Paris.* [Find a picture of the inside of the *Galeries Lafayette* department store in Paris.]
- *Quelle est la date de la construction de l'Arche de la Défense?* [What is the date of the construction of the *Arch of the Defense* neighborhood in Paris?]
- *Trouver le nom de l'acteur français, bien connu aux Etats-Unis, qui a joué un rôle dans le film Le Dernier Métro.* [Find the name of the French actor, well-known in the United States, who played a role in the movie *The Last Metro*.]
- *Trouver le nom du groupe musical qui chante J'ai demandé à la lune.* [Find the name of the music group that sings *I Asked the Moon*.]
- *Trouver l'adresse de la maison de Victor Hugo à Paris.* [Find the address of Victor Hugo's house in Paris.]
- *Trouver le drapeau du Pays Basque. Quelles en sont les couleurs?* [Find the flag of the Basque Country. What are its colors?]
- *Trouver le nom du réalisateur du film À bout de souffle.* [Find the name of the movie director of *Breathless*.]
- *Combien coûte l'entrée au Louvre ?* [How much does it cost to get in to the *Louvre* Museum?]
- *Quel poète français a traduit Edgar Allen Poe de l'anglais?* [What French poet translated the works of Edgar Allen Poe from English to French?]

**VIII. Study Abroad Interview:** This activity engages students in higher-level critical thinking. It leads them to consider what they would want in an exchange program abroad and invites them to explain their choice.

#### LES ÉTUDES À L'ÉTRANGER [STUDY ABROAD]

*Vous allez étudier à l'étranger. Avant d'y aller, il faut que vous décidiez exactement ce que vous voulez en tant que programme d'échange. Faites l'échange suivant avec quelques camarades de classe pour pouvoir comparer vos préférences.* [You're going to study abroad. Before going, you have to decide exactly what you want in a program. Get the following information from several classmates so you can compare your preferences.]

<b>Prénom</b> [First name]:			
<i>quel pays?</i> [what country?]			
<i>quelle ville?</i> [what city?]			
<i>grande ville? village?</i> [big city? town?]			
<i>pendant combien de temps?</i> [for how long?]			
<i>quand?</i> [when?]			



<i>quels cours suivre?</i> [what courses will you take?]			
<i>à l'université ou dans une extension pour étrangers?</i> [at the university or in a program for foreigners?]			
<i>profs américains ou du pays?</i> [American profs or native French-speaking profs?]			
<i>travailler ou pas? stages?</i> [work or not? internship?]			
<i>logement? (en famille, à la résidence, etc.)</i> [lodging? (with a family, in a dorm, etc.)]			
<i>vivre près de l'université ou en ville?</i> [live near the university or in the city?]			
<i>repas inclus?</i> [meals included?]			
<i>voyages guidés? excursions?</i> [prearranged trips? day trips?]			
<i>vivre avec un(e) Américain(e) ou pas?</i> [live with an American student or not?]			
<i>avoir des amis américains?</i> [have American friends or not?]			
<i>vacances? Que feriez-vous?</i> [vacations? What would you do?]			
<i>difficultés anticipées?</i> [anticipated difficulties?]			
<i>avantages et bénéfices?</i> [advantages and benefits?]			



## 6

### **Teacher Designed Trips Abroad: An Option to Consider**

**Sean Hill**

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**W**orld language teachers, perhaps more than any other instructors, know the importance of study abroad experiences in increasing fluency, cross-cultural communication, and global awareness — the skills for the twenty-first century (Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills [P21], 2009). In fact, foreign language educators are in a prime position to offer students opportunities for direct exposure to another culture and language through student travel. Teachers who take students abroad often observe how travel can be a transformative experience in students' lives. One former student reflected recently on her experience in a travel program which the author organized on his own, stating:

While our extremely lucky group stayed in Puerto Rico, more than learning took place. I am pleased to say I lived while on the island — I laughed, danced, swam, and had the best time of my life. I hardly call it learning, but that's exactly what took place. We learned a new way of life, a new culture, and a new sense of ourselves — one that can only be uncovered when someone steps out of their comfort zone, into something completely unknown. [...] Nothing brings more happiness than being able to communicate with a culture other than my own [and being] able to understand and speak to a person when no one else can. I provide a little bit

of comfort for them, and with one word, I make a friend. (M. McIntosh, personal communication, September 15, 2010)

While it is not known if all students in the group were affected by the travel experience as much as this student demonstrates, there is evidence of the influence the experience tends to have. Bellamy and Weinberg (2006) describe this transformative change, arguing that “[y]ears after students return from abroad, they continue to learn languages, are keenly aware of other cultures and are more confident and committed to a sensitive point of view” (p. 20). This finding is mirrored in Bruening and Frick’s (2004) study examining the effects of an internationalized agriculture class with a component in Puerto Rico. Although students only spent ten days on the island, “they were motivated to learn more language and their interest in culture was peaked as a result of this experience” (p. 94). Similarly, Gmelch (1997) reports that many students experience personal growth, as they continuously learn to adapt to novel situations and to make decisions within the new environment. Finally, while most consideration is given to student benefits, Richards and Wilson (2003) also contend that student travel can be beneficial for the destination locale and for increasing cross-cultural understanding.

In this vein, the work of student travel companies cannot be discounted. They provide opportunities for thousands of students to travel to a multitude of countries every single year. In fact, it is quite probable that most of teacher-led trips for students outside the United States are arranged through travel companies. Student travel companies alleviate teachers’ concerns regarding flights, accommodations, transportation, meals, guides, and health issues. They also provide insurance policies for school districts and include additional provisions for student families that cover pre-departure cancellations. Moreover, student travel companies typically have a global network of support and will post photographs on the web so that parents can stay updated throughout the trip. Unfortunately, the costs associated with these trips make travel prohibitive for many students, especially in districts that serve a large proportion of children living in poverty. Huebner (2006) argues that “less affluent students often rule out foreign study from the start. . . . And yet those who miss out on foreign exposure are often those who need it most” (p. 21). Considering the current economic situation and the difficulties many students and their families are facing, teachers who are willing to create and lead their own trips can provide opportunities for their students that would not be possible otherwise. This article provides an example of how to successfully manage a tour of the Yucatan at approximately half to a third of the price typically associated with student travel. More importantly, the cost-saving strategies for the Yucatan can be applied broadly to other global regions and to other languages to provide a viable alternative to student travel companies.

Why would Mexico be an appropriate and beneficial destination for world language teachers when it is so close to the United States and is likely to be the most frequently visited Spanish-speaking country? While tourist spots like Cancun or current border issues usually come to mind when one mentions Mexico, there is another side, unfamiliar to many students and communities. Teachers have the

opportunity to truly open the students' eyes to a different reality in Mexico — one that gets less media coverage. First, this paper discusses typical considerations when taking minors outside of the United States. Second, it describes different sites and places of interest within the Yucatan and provides suggestions on how these sites can engage students in the study of other disciplines. Third, consideration is given to the costs associated with the use of a student travel company. Finally, the author offers advice for teachers interested in saving money for students on how to execute their own travel programs to the Yucatan, applicable to any other regions in Mexico and to other countries as well.

### **Typical considerations when taking minors outside of the United States**

Teachers who have led student trips outside the United States face the same red tape and challenges, which include official documentation, insurance, and communication. First, participants need to secure a passport. Additionally, both parents are required to sign and notarize forms allowing the teacher to take minors out of the country, within 30 days of travel. This can sometimes bring to light students' home situations — many students' parents are divorced, and children live with only one parent, without any contact with the other parent. In such situations, an additional notarized permission to leave the U.S. confirming the full custody must be presented.

Second, students often have a lot of questions on filling out forms at the customs checkpoint. To expedite the process and eliminate confusion for inexperienced travelers, it is beneficial to distribute a handout with the flight numbers and hotel addresses listed prior to travel.

Third, insurance issues require additional planning and allocation of funds. For example, travelers need to keep in mind that U.S. health insurance is not accepted in Mexico, and the required paperwork must be filed upon returning to the U.S. to be reimbursed. Since each insurance company may have a different reimbursement policy, it is advised to verify the coverage before the trip. Travel companies have an advantage here: they handle all hospitalizations, and the cost of the trip typically covers the medical expenses incurred. Another type of insurance concern is automobile coverage. For a small group of students, renting a minivan tends to be the most economical choice. Verification of each individual company's insurance policy will eliminate confusion, but it is usually necessary to carry a copy of the insurance contract when renting a vehicle. If the coverage is not provided, the added cost of purchasing extra insurance must be weighed as part of the group travel costs.

A final consideration when leading a tour is international communication. Major cellular phone companies provide additional international plans, but the cost can be very high. Therefore, general instructions for teachers, students, or worried parents on how to make international calls and what codes to use should be a part of the pre-travel meeting. On the upside, many hotels offer Internet access for students to maintain contact with their parents via email. From the author's personal experience, a few hotel computers are also equipped with webcams for Skype communication. In addition, Mexico has many Internet cafes that are

generally inexpensive, which may be a cheaper and more convenient option than phone calls.

### **Places of interest**

There are many places of significant interest in the Yucatan Peninsula of historical and cultural value. The sites discussed here were visited by the group led by the author. If time allows, teachers may add other sites and activities that are easily accessible from the cities where the group stayed. On this trip, the major sites follow the routes and surroundings from Cancun to Valladolid and Playa del Carmen, Valladolid to Merida, and the Ruta Puuc. The detailed description of the trip follows.

Upon a morning arrival in Cancun, the group immediately rented two mini-vans. The two drivers had previous experience driving in Mexico and/or other Latin American countries and were able to handle the conditions well. In addition, there were fluent Spanish-speakers in each of the vehicles, as well as cell phones in case of emergencies. The first stop was at a bulk retailer to purchase boxes of drinks and snacks. Afterwards, a quick stop at a local restaurant gave students their first opportunity to order food in Spanish. From this point, the group began the real trip. After passing the turnpike on the main road from Cancun to Merida, the first place of note was the archeological site of *Ek Balam* [Black Jaguar]. Located approximately 20 miles north of Valladolid, it remains fairly undiscovered by tourists. Ek Balam holds one of the most amazing pieces of Mayan architecture and art in the Yucatan, with elaborately carved and well-preserved stucco panels of *Templo de los Frisos* [Temple of the Friezes]. “A giant monster mask crowns its summit, and its friezes contain wonderful carvings of figures often referred to as ‘angels’” (Aarons, 2008, p.256), (because of their wings) — but which more likely represented nobles in ceremonial dress. The guides were quite knowledgeable and affordable. To save additional money, the group chose a guide that did not know English, and the instructor interpreted for the group. Everybody learned a few Mayan words in the process. The students were amazed at the view from the main pyramid structure, which is larger than the main pyramid in Chichen Itza (Baird and Cristiano, 2008), and other pyramids appeared in the distance. Afterwards, the group headed south for Valladolid, where the hotel was located. The rest of the evening the group ate dinner at the local restaurant and relaxed by the pool.

The following day was quite long. The group began with breakfast at the hotel and then headed to the *zócalo* [the main square] to learn about the history of Valladolid, as well as exchange money at one of the many *casas de cambio* [currency exchanges]. The Mayan revolts during the War of the Castes and the Mexican Revolution were perhaps the most intriguing aspect of this colonial city’s history, as a bloody testament to the indigenous anger towards the colonizers (Aarons, 2008). From there, the group walked to *Cenote* [Sinkhole] Zací, located only a few blocks from the town center. The sinkholes are a common geological feature of the peninsula, and many people use them for swimming. Afterwards, the group headed along the slow route to Chichen Itza, passing by local villages and observ-

ing the living conditions of the Maya in the area. Before arriving in Chichen Itza, the group visited the caves of Balankanche and learned about the geology and geography of the Yucatan peninsula, as well its cultural objects. The next stop was the tour of Chichen Itza, during which the students could not contain their amazement. Baird and Cristiano (2008) agreed:

The city is built on a scale that evokes a sense of wonder: To fill the plazas during one of the mass rituals that occurred here a millennium ago would have required an enormous number of celebrants. Even today, with the massive flow of tourists through these plazas, the ruins feel empty. (p. 237)

After visiting the ruins, the group ate dinner at a local restaurant that served typical Mayan food and then traveled to an incredibly deep sinkhole, Ik Kil, before continuing the journey to Merida. Many students later remarked that the sinkholes were their favorite part of the trip, and they certainly made the most of the short respites from the heat of the Yucatan.

From Ik Kil, Merida was a simple hour and a half drive. Merida is a large city that “is, and has been for centuries the cultural and commercial center of the Yucatan” (Baird & Cristiano, 2008, p. 194). In addition, its location favors easy day trips. When possible, it is advisable to make the most of either Saturday nights or Sunday mornings in the central plaza. There is typically free music, many dances are performed, and some of the streets are closed. Likewise, there are a couple markets very close to the main square. This can provide low-cost entertainment and cultural learning. There is no better way to understand the market than to experience it first hand by passing through the stands. Students had the opportunity to talk with the vendors and to purchase different goods. Some students even bargained with the vendors when the prices seemed too high. The participants were also able to try new foods and drinks, like *horchata* [a sweet rice beverage] that are difficult to find in Michigan.

The central plaza in Merida also has a lot of history and architecture worth seeing and learning. The San Ildefonso Cathedral is an impressive sight, especially since it is the oldest on the continent and was built by using the blocks from the old Mayan temples (Aarons, 2008). The *Casa de Montejo* should not be missed either. Teachers can ask students to contemplate why Spaniards are standing on the heads of the indigenous. It makes the previous explanation of the War of the Castes more understandable when they see how Spaniards engraved their victories in stone in such a manner.

Next, the participants toured *Palacio del Gobierno* [Government Palace] with an introduction to the ‘Big Three’ muralists of Mexico. Students here had the chance to see murals by Orozco and Siqueiros (free to the public) that depicted the bloody conquest of the Yucatan. There is also a portrait of Lázaro Cárdenas, and this is a great opportunity to discuss the Mexican Revolution, as well as the expropriation of foreign oil companies and the idea of national sovereignty. As students walked along the plaza and the adjoining *Paseo Montejo* [boulevard], it was easy to take the time to explain the opulence of the area, especially at the turn of the twentieth century. This information contradicted the students’ preconceived

notions that all of Mexico is poor. In essence, it is not a difficult task to tie in art, politics, economics, and history to the study of Spanish while visiting the Yucatan.

Located to the north of Merida are two places that fit together well for a day trip. The first place the group visited on the road north was Dzibilchaltun, which was very easy to find. The site covers more than six square miles and it takes a very long time to walk. Before visiting the ruins and the Temple of the Seven Dolls, the students went through the Museum of the Maya People to learn about the history and present life of the Maya. The group also toured a re-creation of a typical dwelling structure and communal area, to look at life from the perspective of traditional Maya.

In addition, there are nature trails to walk that explain the flora and fauna of the area, as well as the enticing Xlakah sinkhole. This was a real treat after walking the entire *sacbé* [road] in the extreme heat. Continuing north, the group spent the remainder of the day in the coastal city of Progreso. Progreso offered students a chance to swim, as well as to try relatively inexpensive and fresh seafood.

To the west of Merida, there is the protected nature preserve at Celestun. This is an estuary in the form of a river, with a narrow strip of land that protects it from the open sea. After renting boats, guides took the students through mangrove forests to see local flora and fauna, especially the flamingoes. Then, the group walked along wooden paths in the mangroves that led to small pools of safe, swimmable water from underground springs. Afterwards, there was still enough time for a small hiking excursion to look for monkeys and tapirs on the main road between Celestun and Merida. It is marked with a small sign with a crossed out monkey that says “No Hunting” in Spanish. This information was not mentioned in any of the tour books the author brought on the trip. The group learned about this secretive place from a local Maya guide that had steered one of the motorboats. This very special unplanned event was enjoyed because of the extra freedom that an ‘on your own’ tour provides.

Any group visiting Merida must make a trip south along the Ruta Puuc. The main road is very well maintained, and there are various sites that can be visited within a relatively short amount of time. The first place visited was the *Hacienda* [Estate] Yaxcopoil. This is a great place to learn about the life of the landowners at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as well as economics and industry, from local to global. Many of the fine household items at the estate were purchased from France, and the heavy industry materials came from the United States. The students were also impressed with the conservation and green technology built into the house, as all the drain spouts collected the rain water for the family’s use.

Continuing along the Ruta Puuc, one finds Uxmal, which is truly one of the most incredible sites in the Yucatan with its soaring vaulted arches and ornate stone mosaics. Hiring a guide for the group can be expensive, but it can provide a much more meaningful experience for the students. Following the Ruta Puuc, one can visit other sites such as Kabah, Sayil, Labna, and the Loltun caves, as well as a few villages along the route if the time allows.

After a long ride back to the Mayan Riviera, this group stayed in Playa del Carmen and made day trips from there, to avoid a typically more expensive resort



area of Cancun. One day, the trip included the area of Tulum, a Mayan trade city that was still inhabited at the time of the arrival of the Spanish. These are the picturesque ruins located atop a cliff overlooking the Caribbean Sea. By then the students had seen many ruins and it was unnecessary to hire a guide.

On the following day, the students chose to spend their time at Xcaret, a coastal theme park with a zoo, although the entrance fee was quite high. There are different eco-rides, such as a river swim that allows for snorkeling, as well as opportunities for swimming with dolphins. The parts of the zoo that caught the students' attention the most were the jaguars and the sea turtles. At night, the group watched a re-creation of the Mayan ball game. After seeing so many ball courts in the different ruins throughout the Yucatan, it was fitting to spend the last night watching the game in action. At nightfall, the group returned to Playa del Carmen and enjoyed dinner in a typical *taquería* [taco restaurant] for a taste of real Mexican tacos.

On the day of the departure, the students were able to actually see a part of Cancun with its famous beaches. With a car, it is easy to stop at the lookout points and see the famous white sand beaches and crystalline Caribbean waters. However, it is not very prudent to allow students to swim at this time because the luggage is packed and ready to be dropped off at the airport. The time of the flight determines what exactly can be done in the remaining time, but high school students appreciate being able to spend some time in Cancun before they return home.

### **The costs**

Any teacher considering providing a travel abroad experience generally knows that the largest determinant of student participation is the cost. While most teachers, including the author, make use of the opportunities provided by student travel companies, there is a niche market for teachers very familiar with Mexico or other countries to create their own tours for a fraction of the normal costs associated with travel, given the right circumstances. This section analyzes the travel expenses and examines ways to reduce the cost for students.

The author's experience with various companies attests to the high quality of service and value provided for the students. In fact, these companies are an essential part of the profession - the vast majority of teachers would never travel with students, were it not for the services provided by these companies. However, for instructors with much experience in Mexico or other parts of Latin America, the services of a student travel company are less necessary. With additional planning on the part of the teachers, the cost for student travel can be kept to a minimum for students who otherwise would never have the opportunity to travel and explore a different part of the world.

A cursory glance over promotional fliers from student travel companies yields little variation in the teacher costs. Teachers travel free, as long as they have signed up the required number of students. Generally, the student price depends on the ratio of students to free chaperones. Obviously, this helps repay the teacher for all

the work associated with leading groups of students abroad. With this information in mind, here are questions to consider:

1. Would a teacher be willing to pay for the opportunity to take a group of students outside of the United States?
2. Are there enough adults willing to pay additional fees as well as the tour costs to accompany teenagers to another country?

Often family members accompany teachers on trips. So, if the teacher takes one or more family members, the benefit of free travel is quickly lost, and the probability of finding an adequate number of chaperones diminishes, particularly in poorer communities. Therefore, the overall price can actually be lower for the teacher and family when teachers plan their 'own' trips (for half to a third of the typical quoted price), compared to the traditional free spot.

For most week-long trips, the airfare is typically the largest portion of the overall variability in price. This is especially true when the costs for hotel accommodations are shared by two or three people. The majority of companies offer a base fare from the cheapest departure cities. Therefore, teachers need to be aware that flying to Cancun, Mexico, from Detroit instead of Miami, can cost nearly double. In addition, the time and month of travel, as well as the air carrier, are big determining factors. For example, flights to Mexico should be avoided during December and January because of the high cost of holiday travel. Hence, a travel abroad experience is typically much more economical during very early summer. This time of the year offers an additional advantage: it is the low tourist season. This helps to keep airfare and hotel costs lower than planning a trip over winter or spring breaks. However, it is important to keep students hydrated and protected from the sun and heat as much as possible. In Mexico and other Caribbean countries, the heat can be a serious concern.

While some of the costs can be directly compared, there are other factors, such as length of a trip and group size that determine the price. The author examined offers from several student travel companies, (all starting from Detroit), as compared to his 'on your own' tour, and found out that:

1. Two of the trip days are solely devoted to travel, whereas the group the author led included various activities on the travel days.
2. Many of the advertised prices are for groups of a certain size. It is typical for companies to add a surcharge for smaller groups, especially if the tour is considered private.
3. Hidden fees can greatly inflate the costs of travel for students. The first and most common hidden fee is the membership or enrollment fee. Many companies charge a nonrefundable fee that helps ensure future travel with the same company. Once this is paid, any member that ever travels with the company again will not be charged for membership. It is fairly improbable, however, that there are many students in the poorer schools who are repeat travelers.
4. When dealing with a travel company, on-time payments are paramount, and many companies have predetermined methods of payment. Generally, there

are several options: to pay the cost upfront, pay the membership fee with the initial payment 30 days afterwards, with the remainder three months before travel, or split the cost into monthly payments. This offers some flexibility for students and parents, although deviation from the planned payment method usually results in a penalty added to the overall cost. When teachers organize their own trips, the way to collect payment is up to the teachers, and there are no late fees.

5. Likewise, there is often a fine when a student has to cancel. In fact, some companies will refund nothing if a trip is canceled within 30 days of travel. For teachers organizing their 'own' trips, the only cost that cannot be fully recovered is the airline ticket. Some hotel bookings may have to be adjusted, perhaps at a slightly higher cost to other students and chaperones, but at least the student does not lose a considerable amount of money.
6. Finally, student travel organizations will drop students automatically if all trip costs are not paid in full 85 days prior to the travel date. All these late fees and automatic cancellations can deter families in more precarious financial situations from even considering travel abroad.
7. Another potential hidden cost involves trip insurance, which is needed for all participants. However, those who do not need to purchase additional insurance sometimes realize that they have purchased it anyway. Some websites include insurance as the default purchase option that adds up to \$15 per day if left unchanged. If parents wish to purchase additional insurance, they may do so on their own when teachers plan their 'own' trips.

One final, and often forgotten, cost to consider when pricing a trip is the additional tipping that comes with the service industry, and the tips for the tour guide that travels with a group, the bus driver, the boat crew, and local guides can add up to a substantial amount (around \$50). Students' resources on teachers' 'own' trips can be applied towards more important expenses, like hotel rooms and bottled water.

## **Planning**

The author has been successful in coordinating similar opportunities for students in a poor, rural area for several years. There are two ways of accomplishing the task: keep costs low and fundraise as much as possible. The following suggestions are based on the author's experience:

Consider the major cost components of the trip: the airfare, the accommodations, and transportation, followed by the price of meals and admission costs. Whatever a student spends beyond these costs is not considered to be a part of the trip. The following paragraphs will examine each of these costs in detail.

Airfare is one of the costs over which a teacher has very little control. This expense, more than any other, determines the cost of a trip for students, and thus, the final group size. Students and parents generally have to make the commitment of paying for the passport and the airfare. When they accomplish this, they are dedicated participants. This allows for all other costs to be calculated.

The next step is to begin arranging an itinerary that takes into account days when museums are closed or when free entertainment is provided for the students. When the itinerary is finalized, it is time to consider the second largest cost, the accommodations. For the Yucatan, it is important to determine the cities that will easily allow for day trips but also have reasonable hotel rates. Valladolid was chosen as the first night's stay especially because of its distance from Cancun and its proximity to Ek Balam and Chichen Itza. Merida was chosen as the second city for three nights because of its historical importance in the Yucatan, as well for its centrality to the Ruta Puuc, Celestun, and Progreso. Similarly, Playa del Carmen was chosen as the last destination because of its proximity to most locations of interest along the Riviera Maya. Ultimately, the decision of which hotel to use was based on a combination of the best quote, availability, traveler opinions, and if it included breakfast. For this trip, the total accommodations cost per person for seven nights was \$163, which included three breakfasts, with three or four people sharing a room (See Table 1).

**Table 1.** Major Expenses per Student on the Yucatan Tour

Category of Expense	Cost
Airfare	\$346
Hotel	
Valladolid	\$29
Merida	\$25
Playa del Carmen	\$20
Transportation	\$112
Entrance fees	\$145
Meals	\$144
Fundraising	-\$186
Total	\$635
Total without meals	\$491

*Note:* Cost is rounded to the nearest whole dollar.

The next cost, the transportation, is very dependent on the group size. Typically, smaller groups easily fit in a minivan, and the costs for the rental, gas, and parking are then estimated and divided. Larger groups might need to rent a bus or consider public transportation. A large rental bus, however, can be very costly in Mexico. Therefore, the group decided to rent two minivans instead, and the two drivers had prior experience driving in Mexico and/or Latin America. Another reason for the rental was the travel flexibility it offered. Luckily, there were no charges for parking at any of the hotels, so the only charges were for the rental, gas, toll roads, and parking at the attractions.

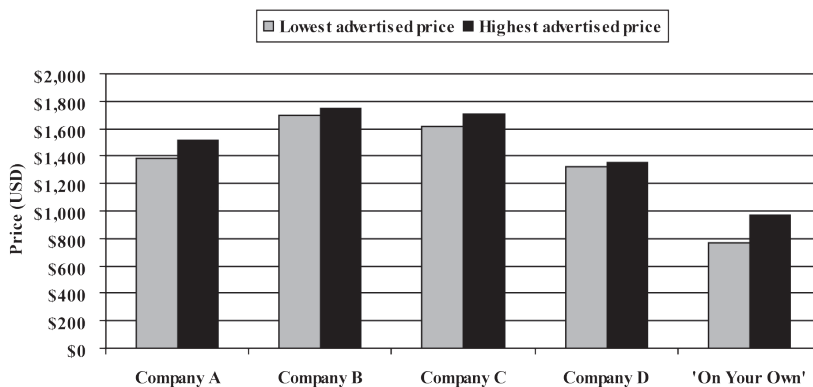
In order to handle the costs of entrance tickets for museums and excursions during the trip, a group fund was created with each participant paying \$200 on the day the group left for Mexico. This way, the instructor was able to purchase

entrances tickets for all the participants at once and pay for gas with cash. The teacher can determine when this payment has to be made, but unlike student travel companies, the deadlines for payment can be much more flexible to accommodate all students.

The group's successful fundraising covered the cost of lodging and transportation. There was only one additional expense left: food. Students were told to allot approximately \$18/day for food. The group fund was able to cover one lunch and one dinner for the group, and everybody had breakfast included during three of the mornings. In addition, group money bought snacks, water, and juice to prevent dehydration. The food allocation was not collected. At the end of the trip, the author reimbursed all the unused monies to each participant. Each student and parent effectively paid \$491 for the trip to Mexico, not including what students and adults spent on food and drink when it was not provided (see Table 1).

In summary, the total cost per participant was approximately \$965. This included airfare, hotel, transportation, entrance fees, and food and drink. However, subtracting the unknown cost of each individual's food bill brought the total cost for the trip down to \$766. The group was also able to fundraise approximately \$3500 to cover lodging and transportation. With the reimbursed monies, the total cost for each participant was \$491 for eight days in Mexico. Thus, this group effectively paid less than half the price for a similar week-long trip by a student travel company (See Figure 1).

**Figure 1.** Price comparison for student travel to Mexico with the author and with several student travel companies for trips of similar duration and itinerary.



Visiting Mexico can be very beneficial because it offers learning opportunities that would allow for students to truly get to know their 'neighbor' and look beyond the superficial images created by the negative publicity. A different version of the country is but a quick flight away — and within the means of most students. In addition, Mexico's Yucatan is easy for tourists to navigate, and the different sites can

interest students in a variety of disciplines. While cutting the costs considerably compared to travel companies, teachers who design trips on their own can save students and their families needed resources, and at the same time increase overall participation in the program. By following the outline and recommendations presented in this paper, teachers can create trips that are both highly educational and unforgettable.

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## Appendix A

### *Sample Itinerary*

- **Day 1**
  - Morning Flight to Cancun
  - Minivan Rental
  - Buying Snacks in Bulk
  - Lunch at VIPS
  - Ek Balam Ruins
  - Dinner and Hotel in Valladolid
- **Day 2**
  - Downtown Valladolid
  - Cenote Swimming
  - Balancanche Cave Systems
  - Chichen Itza
  - Dinner
  - Cenote Ik Kil
  - Drive to Merida
- **Day 3**
  - Dzibilchaltun Ruins
  - Progreso Beach
- **Day 4**
  - Sunday Festival in Downtown Merida
  - Government Palace and Murals
  - San Ildefonso Cathedral
  - Traditional Market
  - Celestun - Petenes Ecological Reserve
  - Watching for Monkeys
- **Day 5**
  - Hacienda Yaxcopoil
  - La Ruta Puuc
  - Uxmal
  - Kabah
  - Sayil
  - Dinner in Merida
  - Drive to Playa del Carmen
- **Day 6**
  - Tulum
  - Shopping
  - Dinner in Playa del Carmen
- **Day 7**
  - Xcaret
  - Traditional Taqueria
- **Day 8**
  - The Cancun Strip
  - Lunch and Shopping
  - Return to Detroit





# 7

## TEACHING COMPASSION AND CULTURE THROUGH CONTEMPORARY MUSIC

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**I**n this article the authors share strategies for using contemporary French music to support students' understanding of the nuances of French and Francophone humor and cultural references and elicit meaningful discussion in an authentic cultural context. Since the technological advances of the twenty-first century sometimes make it hard for teachers and students to relate to one another on a human level, the authors propose contemporary Francophone music as a vehicle for bridging the generational and emotional gap. They structure their ideas around the themes of compassionate teaching and teaching compassion as proposed by the renowned philosopher Nel Noddings (1984), whose ideas on moral education focus on the development of a caring relationship between teacher and student. According to Bergman (2004, p. 149),

Nel Noddings is arguably one of the premier philosophers of moral education in the English speaking world today. Although she is outside the mainstream theory, research, and practice traditions of cognitive developmentalism (the Kohlberg legacy) and of character education (which is in public ascendancy), her body of work is unrivalled for originality of insight, comprehensiveness and coherence.

This article emphasizes resources that meet what Noddings calls “[the teacher’s] special responsibility for the enhancement of the ethical ideal” (p. 178). Of particular importance in the authors’ approach to teaching music are Noddings’ (1984) ideas on “engrossment,” or “apprehending the other’s reality, feeling what he feels as nearly as possible” (p. 16). However, the term here is interpreted in the more general sense of being receptive to the perceptions and feelings of a class as a whole.

In the new technological era that defines the 21<sup>st</sup> century, entertainment is king and the young strongly identify with music, video clips, and other forms of media. Traditional pedagogical content no longer suffices to fully engage students. While language teachers have led the way in moving from a teacher-centered approach to a more interactive student-centered classroom, many find it difficult to tailor lessons and materials to the new electronically aware generation. In the authors’ experience, popular foreign language music can enhance student interest while breaking down resistance to language learning and providing teachers and students a context for thoughtful dialogue.

Crossing linguistic and cultural barriers, foreign pop music appeals to American students by making them laugh and even cry when songs tell concentrated stories with global themes of love, loss, betrayal, despair, loneliness, marginality, powerlessness, and injustice. In keeping with Noddings’ (1984) goal for creating a mutually caring relationship based on understanding and respect, the song choice introduced here is contemporary and reflects current issues that 21<sup>st</sup> century students can easily relate to. This paper presents a variety of songs and videos whose themes and messages are relevant to American youth. At the same time, this music elicits compassion and laughter and conveys a profound understanding of modern French and Francophone society. Modern music is a “*moyen ludique, motivant et original pour les jeunes comme les moins jeunes d’avoir accès à la langue française contemporaine, aux cultures francophones et de découvrir le français oral dans toute sa diversité...* [Playful, motivational and original medium for the young and the not so young to access contemporary French language, Francophone cultures and to discover oral French in all its diversity]” (De Barros, Marques, & Ressouches, 2004).

In the summer of 2010, an anonymous survey was distributed to French high school teachers (See Appendix A), asking them if and how they use contemporary music as a catalyst for class discussion. Of 31 teachers, only 13 said they used music in this way. Most respondents said that music was used as a backdrop to group work; as a means of practicing grammar, vocabulary, and phonetics; or purely for entertainment. Of the 13 teachers who used music to stimulate class discussion, three used classic piano bar style French music, such as Piaf’s (1946, Track 1) *La Vie En Rose* [Life Through Rose-colored Glasses], for discussing biography and French history or old-fashioned sing-alongs like Joe Dassin’s (1969, Track 3) *Aux Champs Élysées* [On the Champs Élysées Avenue] to introduce Parisian life and geography.

Teachers who use contemporary French or Francophone music have a variety of ways of incorporating it into the curriculum. One does a *chanson de la semaine*

[song of the week] that she finds on iTunes France or the Top 40 lists in French speaking countries. She feels that music is a “universal language” that her students relate to and that it excites them about learning French culture: “Music can bridge gaps and make culture accessible.” She says that her students often find music for her now that they are acquainted with it. Another teacher does a weekly *mercredi musical* [Musical Wednesday], with music videos and discussion. She particularly likes the *Enfoirés* [The Jerks] videos “because much of the music corresponds with cultural phenomena such as hunger and homelessness.” Another teacher uses the hit musical *Notre Dame de Paris* [Our Lady of Paris, a cathedral] (Cocciant, 1998) when doing a unit on castles and cathedrals, the French version of *Les Misérables* [The Destitute] (Boublil, 1991) when studying nineteenth-century French literature and history, and *Le Roi Soleil* [The Sun King] (Ouali, 2005) when studying the life of Louis XIV. Another teacher uses the *Grand Corps Malade* [Tall Sick Body] (2008b) music videos “because they’re funny and the students enjoy them.” One teacher created a Wiki for her students “where they can go and listen to music at any time.” She has two pages: “One for the classics and one for current Francophone musicians.” One teacher said she uses Bénabar’s (2008, Track 1) *L’Effet Papillon* [The Butterfly Effect] video in her class to discuss the importance of recycling, but she “glosses over the infidelity part!” Finally, one teacher uses Christophe Maé’s (2007, Track 4) *Parce Qu’on Ne Sait Jamais* [Because You Never Know] to talk about “what it is to be a good person, and what happens when you die.” All teachers polled said that students love learning with music, and even those who didn’t use music for cultural discussion openers felt that the students were learning a lot about culture “as a by-product of watching the videos.”

By incorporating current pop, rap, and rock, as well as popular musicals, into the curriculum, teachers give students a clear picture of the diversity of contemporary French and Francophone youth culture, thus dispelling myths about French homogeneity and snobbism. In addition, a focus on the universal themes permeating the world, youth music allows teachers to draw connections between modern American culture and the target cultures being studied. More importantly, interesting and age-appropriate lyrics and videos can provide the basis for a respectful discussion about social values and feelings that can bridge cultural gaps and engage students in productive self-reflection. When language teachers aim to reach their students by developing accessible and exciting target language lessons with familiar content or themes, they are showing respect for the students’ culture and learning styles, thus meeting the students halfway. The song choice, its themes and tone, combined with the teacher’s caring pedagogical style can foster cooperative and positive discussion on sensitive subjects, thus furthering the goals of moral education. “If dialogue is to occur in schools, it must be legitimate to discuss whatever is of intellectual interest to the students who are invited into dialogue; ... love, fear, hope, and hate must all be open to discussion” (Noddings, 1984, p. 183).

Recent music and videos by the popular hip-hop singer Soprano (Saïd M’Roumbaba, born in Marseilles of Comorian heritage) directly ask the listeners to think about the state of the world and to put themselves in the place of the

less fortunate. In 2007, he co-produced with Blacko a beautiful song and video called *Ferme Les Yeux Et Imagine-Toi* [Close Your Eyes and Imagine Yourself] (Soprano, 2007a, Track 1; 2007b) that transports the listener/viewer from Paris to the desert, where famine, drought, violence, and other calamities are transformed from theoretical constructs into harsh realities that demand the world's attention. The singers condemn the comfortable notion that *Ça n'arrive qu'aux autres* [That only happens to others] and scold both their audience and themselves for whining about relatively small problems:

*Ferme tes yeux et imagine ta vie,  
 Dans ces pays où les hommes politiques sont en treillis  
 Où la liberté d'expression est une conspiration,  
 Où le dollar civilise avec des canons,  
 Où on peut mourir d'une simple fièvre,  
 Où les épidémies se promènent sans laisse*

[Close your eyes and imagine your life,  
 In one of those countries where politicians are in fatigues  
 Where freedom of expression is a conspiracy,  
 Where dollars bed down with guns,  
 Where one can die from a simple fever,  
 Where epidemics stroll about unleashed]

The song is full of images of despair, with children digging through mountains of garbage for scraps of food, farmers walking their cattle 30 kilometers through arid lands for a place to graze, people struggling to survive without food and water, and people dying from AIDS, *une maladie qui te juge coupable* [an illness for which people see you as guilty]. Finally, the song takes the listener back to Paris, with images of homeless people under a highway bridge fighting hunger and cold. Suddenly, the homeless person has *ton visage* [your face], thus obliging the listener/viewer to identify with the marginalized members of society. The singers ask for forgiveness for their self-centered attitude, modeling behavior that the listener/viewer should imitate and expressing the feeling that it is never too late to care.

In a more recent video, Soprano uses clips from the American television series, NBC's *Heroes*, (Kring, Hammer, Arkush, & Beeman, 2010) cleverly intertwined with newsreel footage and animation to illustrate themes in *Hiro*, an immensely popular song from his 2010 album *La Colombe* [The Dove] (Track 5). In the TV show, Hiro Nakamura's character is one of the gifted young stars of the series, whose particular power is the ability to curve the space-time continuum. With his power, he is able to travel through time, preventing disasters and saving lives. In the song/video, Soprano imagines what he would do if he had Hiro's powers. The result is an eclectic series of images and ideas that reflect universal longings for first-person involvement in historical events, the desire to communicate with cultural and social icons, and a desperate wish to re-write the tragedies and losses that make up recent history. Because of its references to contemporary American television, politics, history, and current events, this song holds a particular appeal

for American students who can recognize many of the images, celebrities, and events. Students can also appreciate the contemporary editing, which involves a rapid succession of seemingly non-related clips, tied together with a regular beat and a catchy hip-hop melody.

The singer's references range from the deeply personal (the birth of his children, the death of his grandfather), to global icons (Martin Luther King, Barack Obama, Malcom X, Mohamed Ali, Lady Diana, Jimi Hendrix, Rosa Parks, Michael Jackson). The *si* clause [if/then clause] construction points to the unfulfilled nature of the singer's wishes: *Si j'avais eu le pouvoir de Hiro Nakamura, j'aurais été voir mon grand-père une dernière fois* [If I had had the power of Hiro Nakamura, I would have gone to see my grandfather one last time]. The song/video's power stems in part from the technique of alternating humor and tragedy, breaking down the listeners/viewer's defenses by catching them off guard:

*J'aurais été m'asseoir auprès de Rosa Parks  
 Puis à Woodstock pour vivre un live de Jimi Hendrix  
 J'aurais été à l'anniversaire de la Motown  
 Pour aller voir Michael nous faire le moonwalk  
 J'aurais été à New-York  
 Pour déclencher à 7 h une alerte à la bombe dans les 2 tours  
 J'aurais été en Irak  
 Apprendre aux journalistes à mieux viser avec leur chaussure*

[I would have gone and sat next to Rosa Parks  
 Then to Woodstock to watch Jim Hendrix in concert  
 I would have gone to Motown's anniversary  
 To see Michael do his Moonwalk  
 I would have gone to New York  
 To set off an alarm at 7:00 in the Twin Towers  
 I would have gone to Iraq  
 To teach the reporters to aim better with their shoes]

Soprano's political commentary, combined with admiration for American pop culture and a heartfelt sense of the depth of the 9-11 tragedy give great insight into foreign perceptions of the U.S., and distinguish disagreement with American politicians from general attitudes about Americans and the American culture more efficiently than any dry lecture possibly could. In this song/video, the singer clearly admires many aspects of the American culture and professes his grief for the loss of American lives during the country's worst terrorist attacks, while differing sharply with U.S. politics in Iraq.

In addition to teaching self-reflection and dispelling stereotypes about French attitudes toward Americans, *Hiro* (Soprano, 2010, Track 5) provides a jumping point for discussing French and Francophone culture, with its references to the singer's Comorian heritage, the Paris-Dakar auto race, the French colonial period, and French cultural icons and events. The singer's wish to *boycotter l'hélico de Daniel Balavoine* [to boycott Daniel Balavoine's helicopter] refers to the untimely demise of a beloved French singer and human rights activist whose helicopter

crashed in 1986 during a humanitarian mission in Mali. Ironically, the singer's desire to vandalize Coluche's motorcycle, *Moi, qui aime les vérités de ceux qui portent un nez rouge/J'aurais été crever les pneus de la moto de Coluche* [I, who likes the wisdom of those who wear a red nose/Would have slashed the tires of Coluche's motorcycle], is really a fantasy about saving the life of a noble comedian-humanitarian whose accidental death threw France into mourning in 1986, the same fateful year as Balavoine's.

Other themes in the song include global warming, Christianity and Islam, the 2005 French riots, Ghandi's salt march, the Senegalese Rifles Brigade, immigration in France, slavery, and even Hitler's birth: *J'aurais été en Autriche/J'aurais tout fait pour que les parents d'Adolf Hitler ne se rencontrent jamais* [I would have gone to Austria/I would have done all in my power to keep Hitler's parents from meeting].

At the same time, even with these powers the singer recognizes that he would have been useless in the face of natural calamities such as the earthquake in Haiti, the Indian Ocean tsunami, Hurricane Katrina, or the melting ice caps in Alaska. At the conclusion, the singer concedes that his song is nothing more than a series of beautiful pipe dreams and *on ne peut vivre que le présent* [you can only live in the present], but he leaves open a wide variety of discussion subjects that provide students with "shared efforts at caring" (Noddings, 1984, p. 187). Students in one class were so moved by the song that they spontaneously answered each other's questions about content and enthusiastically participated in a small group discussion about what they would do if they had had Hiro's power. The authors' favorite activity involves using the conditional tense to create a series of prevented meetings: the parents of Mark David Chapman, Saddam Hussein, Osama Bin Laden, etc.

The song *Ici Les Enfoirés* [Here Come the Jerks] (Les enfoirés, 2009, Track 16) speaks to the current world recession and economic crisis in its portrayal of homeless and hungry people in the developed nation of France. This song is the title song from the 2009 edition of the *Restos du cœur* [Restaurants of the Heart] concert tour and album. The term *enfoiré* is actually more vulgar than the above translation would suggest, but in the context of the charitable movement, it has become accepted by the French people as a mark of respect. Those who join the movement voluntarily characterize themselves as "jerks" because they take pride in being stubborn and rude in their support of the poor. Founded by the comedian Coluche on September 26, 1985 to feed the hungry and homeless that winter, the temporary charitable organization is now celebrating its twenty-fifth anniversary: *On nous avait dit c'est pour un soir/On est là vingt ans plus tard* [They told us it's for one night/We're still here twenty years later]. Each year since its inception, major French film and music celebrities organize a concert and put forth an album with adaptations of many of the top songs of the year, along with some classics. All profits go directly to the association and are used to feed and clothe the poor. Rather than boast about their fundraising, the artists in the group use irony and wit to lament the continued need for such charity: *Et si tu trouves un jour la solution/On fêtera tous notre dissolution* [And if one day you find a solution/We'll all celebrate our dissolution].

Because the video and song show the reality of poverty and despair in a wealthy country, students see another side of France, the country that they know mainly as one with high culture. While a surprise, the themes are familiar to most students who can attest to having seen or met homeless people themselves. Although *Les Restos du cœur* is a uniquely French charity, the problems it addresses are universal: *Ici les Enfoirés/Oh oh oh, rejoins notre armée/Chaque année plus de gens secourus/Mais chaque année plus encore à la rue* [The Jerks are on their way/Oh oh oh, join our army/Each year more people saved/But each year more people on the street]. The use of the word “army” is symbolic of a state of all-out war against injustice, with a volunteer army of growing numbers. In opposition to the traditional sense of the word, this army aims to build, repair, and offer help. The video is moving in that it is devoid of special effects and features simple close-ups of French and Francophone stars and the people being helped, thus conveying a message of equality and respect. The jump cuts between shots are timed to the beat of the music; shots of single faces moving their lips to the music are followed by close-ups of people interacting playfully, revealing their connection to one another and their devotion to the movement (or “army”), and thereby making the idea of joining their cause seem appealing.

A song that affects students on a very personal level is Keen’V’s *Explique-Moi* [Please explain] released on his latest album *Carpe Diem* on September 27, 2010 (Track 6). This song shows the universal fear parents feel for their children when they begin driving and going out with their friends: *Elle a peur pour moi car j’pars avec mes gar/Et c’est vrai que eux sont portés sur la vodka* [She’s afraid for me because I’m going out with the guys/And it’s true that they have a thing for vodka]. The mother in this song is respected by her son, who understands her warnings about mixing alcohol and driving, and promises to follow the rules: *Fais attention à toi; surtout ne bois pas/Car l’alcool au volant a fait trop de dégâts* [Be careful, and above all don’t drink/Because drinking and driving has caused too much damage]. This song could be used in conjunction with a presentation from Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) given that it illustrates the organization’s top priority of putting an end to needless deaths: “Behind every drunk driving statistic is a person whose life was full of family and friends, love and life, joy and laughter. Collectively, they are mothers, fathers, sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, friends, neighbors and co-workers. Their lives touched so many and they will never be forgotten” (Mothers Against Drunk Driving, 2010).

To reinforce the song’s themes, teachers could show students the French Canadian MADD site, with an empowering French pledge against mixing alcohol and driving:

*JE décide – JE m’exprime – JE conserve mon droit de rentrer en sécurité.*

*MADD JEunesse – JE fais des choix éclairés; JE ne mélange jamais l’alcool, la drogue et la conduite*

*MADD JEunesse – Parce que JE tiens à mes amis, JE les aide à comprendre que l’alcool, la drogue et la conduite font un mélange explosif.*

*MADD JEunesse – JE m’organise d’avance avec mes amis pour que chacun soit à son tour le conducteur désigné.*

*MADD JEunesse – JE refuse de monter en voiture avec un conducteur aux facultés affaiblies.*

[I decide – I express myself – I have the right to get home safely.

MADD Youth – Because I care for my friends; I help them understand that alcohol, drugs, and driving make an explosive mixture.

MADD Youth – I plan ahead with my friends so everyone takes turns being the designated driver.

MADD Youth – I refuse to get in a car if the driver has weakened reflexes] (Mothers Against Drunk Driving, Canada, 2010).

Above all, this song shows how the lives of French and American teens are not very different. Friday and Saturday nights are similar (although in this song, American students learn that French teens wait to go out until midnight and don't return home until the early morning). Flirting, partying and drinking are analogous, as are the risks that adolescents run just by being out at such late hours: *Je me suis apprêté afin de plaire aux filles/Je récupère mes clés, mon argent, mon permis/Ainsi que mon téléphone portable en cas d'ennui* [I make myself look good to attract the girls/I grab my keys, my money, my license/As well as my cell phone in case of trouble].

Students watching this video can see that alcohol is not just an American problem. In this song, the young driver follows all the rules but becomes the victim of a drunk driver. Thus, the class discussion can focus on the unfairness of life or choices that others make. Students can also decide whether the intention of the song is to strike fear in them. A writing assignment could involve changing the narrator. Since the story is told from the point of view of the young man, the students could easily change the point of view to that of the mother, describing her fears, her hopes, and her reaction to his accident. They could also write a parallel story told from the perspective of the drunk driver who hit him, given that the title and the ending of the song call for an explanation: *Avant de partir j'aimerais savoir/Pourquoi celui qui m'a percuté s'est mis à boire* [Before leaving I'd like to know/Why the person who hit me decided to drink] (Keen'V, 2010, Track 6). In addition to the obvious lesson implied in this song, adolescent students will recognize dangers that they face in their personal lives.

Another subject that touches students on a personal level is love and loss. Noddings describes the importance of including lessons in "a curriculum that is aimed at receptivity and relatedness. Along with cultural and personal dimensions of the subject, one should consider the psychological dimension. As students engage in a variety of practical experiences, they will experience a variety of affects" (1984, p. 192). In songs about love students may recognize expressions of heartache and take comfort in shared grief and recovery.

In rap singer Diam's (2009a, Track 6; 2009b) *Cœur de bombe* [Exploding Heart], a 'perfect' love story sours after three years during which the boyfriend constantly refuses deeper commitment. After a fairytale beginning, the ending is ugly: *Il m'insulte, me lynche, me tire même son chapeau/C'est donc vrai que derrière les princes, il y a toujours un crapaud* [He insults me, lynches me, and even takes



off/So it's true that inside each prince dwells a toad]. The ex-girlfriend is left with mixed feelings, knowing that the boyfriend will return within three months, and that she will have to decide whether or not to take him back: *Car sûr, ma jolie bombe reviendra taper à ma porte, je sais; il me dira ce que je rêvais d'entendre/Qu'il veut enfanter, me marier sans attendre* [Because it's sure, my handsome bombshell will come back, knocking at my door; he'll tell me what I wanted to hear/That he wants children and to get married right away]. The ending of the song is enigmatic because Diam's finishes it with a Lafontaine-like moral, telling men to hold onto their women before another "bombshell" takes them away. Because the outcome of the breakup is not clear, students could debate the girlfriend's choice, basing their ideas on the song and on personal experience, thereby generating a real exchange.

In another breakup song, *Tant Besoin De Toi* [I Need You So Badly], Haitian singer Marc Antoine (2008a, Track 1; 2008b) dramatically expresses his desperate need to keep his girlfriend from leaving him:

*Si tu m'abandonnes, je n'aurais plus personne  
De ton amour je serais privé  
Chaque seconde sera ma fin du monde  
Je n'pourrais jamais le supporter*

[If you abandon me, I'll have no one  
I'll be deprived of your love  
Each second will be the end of my life  
I could never bear it]

The reason for the failure of the relationship is very different from the preceding one. Here it is because the girlfriend is white and the boyfriend is black. Further, the problem is not because they have fallen out of love, but because their families are racist. Interestingly, the song lyrics alone never refer to the issues of racism. The undercurrent of racism is, however, very clear in the music video when the white girlfriend is snubbed by the boyfriend's parents, and again when the black boyfriend is ignored by the girlfriend's parents. Other overt references to racism are spoken, and therefore not included in the song. The girlfriend's friend tells her, *Méfie-toi de ce genre de mecs* [Watch out for that kind of guy]. Later, her father asks her, *Qu'est-ce que tu fous avec un type pareil* [What on Earth are you doing with a guy like him]? In the end, when hurt feelings and fear take over, the lovers succumb to societal pressures. This song, and especially the video, can open up discussion on the subject of racism in our contemporary society.

Salif Keïta, the 2010 winner of the World Music category for Les Victoires de la Musique [Music Victories Awards Show], has spent his life singing about injustice and promoting tolerance. Born an albino to a noble Malian family, the descendant of the legendary African emperor Soundiata Keïta, Salif Keïta suffered from discrimination as a child, even from within his own family: *Mon père, dans mon enfance, m'a rejeté d'abord avant de comprendre. Il était comme les autres. Il n'avait pas compris pourquoi j'étais blanc. Par la suite, il est devenu mon plus grand supporter. Et il a séché toutes les larmes qu'il m'avait fait couler* [My father, in my childhood, initially rejected me before understanding. He was like the others. He

couldn't understand why I was white. Later, he became my biggest fan. And he dried all the tears he had made me shed] (Maliweb, 2010). In his award winning song, *La Différence* [Difference], Keïta (2009, Track 1) transforms what is commonly perceived as ugly and even diabolical into something positive:

*Je suis un noir  
Ma peau est blanche  
Et moi, j'aime bien ça  
C'est La Différence qui est jolie  
Je suis un blanc  
Mon sang est noir  
Et moi, j'adore ça  
C'est La Différence qui est jolie*

[I am black  
My skin is white  
And I like that  
It's Difference that is beautiful  
I am white  
My blood is black  
And I love that  
It's Difference that is beautiful]

This song is moving in its simplicity, but is downright troubling when background information is presented. Students will be saddened to learn that since albinos are considered evil in Keïta's native Mali and in other African countries, they are still persecuted and sometimes killed. Sure that these practices would have been abandoned by now, Keïta finds that *Au XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle, je vois encore qu'il y a des sacrifices humains. On vend le sang des albinos, leurs cheveux, leurs membres* [In the twenty-first century, I see that there are still human sacrifices. Albino blood, hair and limbs are sold] (Maliweb, 2010). His *Fondation Salif Keïta pour les albinos* [Salif Keïta Foundation for Albinos] has been working tirelessly since 2001 to educate Malians and dispel prejudices and myths that lead to fear and violence, and to protect albinos from the harmful effects of the sun (Keïta, 2010).

Another song/video that broaches themes of discrimination and stereotypes is GCM's (2008a, Track 2) *Je Viens De La* [I Come From There], a heartfelt apology for Saint-Denis, a much-maligned suburb of Paris with a reputation for violence and crime. The lanky GCM (*Grand Corps Malade*) [Tall Sick Body], a native of Saint-Denis, carries a cane and walks with a limp after surviving an accident that should have killed him. His time spent in the hospital as a child, his arduous road to recovery, and his abundantly developed faculties for observation provide the Slam artist-singer-poet with ample material for songs about life, love, friendship, fear, and hope. His poignant song-poems are spoken and sung in his clear, deep baritone to a rap rhythm, with orchestral, hip-hop, or jazz accompaniment. While tackling both the existential and the concrete, he spices his compositions with clever word play, analogies, slang, internal and external rhyme, and bawdy humor.

In *Je Viens De Là*, GCM lauds the integral diversity and colorfulness of his neighborhood, with its immigrant population, its markets, its odors, its noisiness, and its constant motion:

*Je viens de là où on échange, je viens de là où on s'mélange  
Moi, c'est l'absence de bruits et d'odeurs qui me dérange  
Je viens de là où l'arc-en-ciel n'a pas six couleurs mais dix-huit  
Je viens de là où la France est un pays cosmopolite*

[I come from there, where people barter, I come from there, where people mix  
It's the absence of noise and odors that troubles me  
I come from there, where the rainbow doesn't have six colors, but eighteen  
I come from there, where France is a cosmopolitan country]

Not only does GCM extol the virtues of his neighborhood, he does so with a tinge of pity for those who do not experience the joys of diversity on a daily basis. He expresses his loyalty to his birthplace and a feeling of intellectual debt in the refrain, which implies that without this cultural upbringing he may never have become a poet:

*Je viens de là et je kiffe ça, malgré tout ce qu'on pense  
À chacun son territoire, à chacun sa France  
Si j'rends hommage à ces lieux, à chaque expiration  
C'est que c'est ici qu' j'ai puisé toute mon inspiration*

[I come from there and I love it, no matter what they think  
To each his own region, to each his own France  
If I pay tribute to this place, with each breath  
It's because this is where I find my inspiration]

GCM's use of the language used by the culturally diverse young residents of the *banlieues* [suburbs] makes his poetry accessible and interesting to American students and provides a springboard for class discussion about linguistic and cultural transformation in modern France. Contrary to the stereotypes students often hold of the stuffy French, this song exposes them to the use of slang, backslang, Arabic vocabulary, Arabic backslang (*beur = rebeu* [Arabic = Bicarab]), and other neologisms arising from a multitude of source cultures. The depth of GCM's multicultural insights is evident in the pride he feels for his neighborhood's porous and dynamic oral expression:

*Je viens de là où le langage est en permanente évolution  
Verlan, rebeu, argot, gros processus de création  
Chez nous, les chercheurs, les linguistes prennent rendez-vous  
On n'a pas tout le temps le même dictionnaire, mais on a plus de mots que vous*

[I come from there, where language is in permanent evolution  
Backslang, "Bicarab," slang, an immense creation in motion  
In our town, researchers and linguists set up meetings  
We don't always have the same dictionary, but we have more words than you]

The tone of GCM's song and video is optimistic and proud. He compares the reality of his life to the paranoid representations of his neighborhood in the news. Using humor, he dispels fear mongering while understanding how non-residents must feel afraid of the unknown: *Si jamais j'connaisais pas, j'y emmenerais même pas mon chien!* [If I didn't already know the place, I wouldn't even bring my dog!] Students could analyze the text of the song by making a list of positive and negative images and comparing GCM's views to those put forth by the media. In addition, they could compare the portrait of Saint-Denis to any ill-famed neighborhood in the U.S. or to their own neighborhood, writing a song from the viewpoint of a resident who understands the place intuitively rather than from a third-party perspective.

Pascal Obispo's (2009a, Track 3; 2009b) point of view in his recent hit *Idéaliste* [Idealist] is more global than local. In a world where the greenhouse effect is melting glaciers and causing international concern, Obispo's song addresses things everyone can do to make a difference, because *Il y a bien à faire* [There's a lot to do] to make the world a healthier place. Obispo (whose full name is an anagram of Pablo Picasso) is well known for his work with charitable organizations that fight hunger, homelessness, and diseases like AIDS. In his latest album, *Welcome to the World of Captain Samouraï Flower* he tackles pollution, desertification, and other environmental issues. The song's message is clear: the only way to win the war against the destruction of the planet is to join forces:

*Idéaliste, utopiste, humanitaire*  
*Dans ma chair*  
*Idéaliste pour la Terre*  
*Y a bien à faire*  
*Idéaliste*  
*Tous pour un*  
*Les mousquetaires*  
*Main dans la main*

[Idealist, utopian, humanitarian  
 In the flesh  
 Idealistic about Planet Earth  
 There's a lot to do  
 All for one  
 The musketeers  
 Hand in hand]

The upbeat music video is an obvious homage to the Sergeant Pepper period of the Beatles, with the vivid colors and uniforms and a similar musical style. The animated versions of the band members throw seeds into a desert and soon find themselves walking in a verdant forest. In addition to making the obvious comparisons with the Beatles and their animated movies, students could discuss what they can do for their planet and why this is important.

The above songs and examples represent a small selection of recent musical choices available to teachers for eliciting emotional reactions in students. Other

possibilities include La Fouine's (2009, Track 3) *On Est Tous Les Mêmes* [We Are All The Same] to address intercultural communication, Calogero's (2009, Track 2) *C'est Dit* [It is Said] to discuss long-lasting versus superficial friendships, Amel Bent's (2009, Track 6) *Je Me Sens Bien* [I Feel Good] for a look at failure and redemption, Helmut Fritz' (2009a, Track 1) *Ça M'énerve* [That Drives Me Crazy] for an acerbic critique of fads and fashionistas, Fritz' (2009b, Track 5) *Miss France* for a sarcastic condemnation of beauty pageants, Pink Martini's (1999) *Je Ne Veux Pas Travailler* [I don't want to work] for a humorous take on the "All work, no play" theme, Sexion d'Assaut's (2010, Track 16) *Désolé* [Sorry] for a troubling view of marginalized youth, and Bel Air Dee Jayz' (2010, Track 1) "Tu Fesses B'Hook" [You Facebook] for an ironic view of the pitfalls of our electronic era.

The Francophone music scene is constantly evolving and does far more than keep pace with Anglophone music, as it continually reinvents itself, incorporating themes and riffs from French speaking Africa, North Africa, and trends from outside the Paris Beltway. By tailoring lessons to appeal to American youth culture, French teachers can bridge the generational gap, pique interest and involve students in a dialogue about what it is to be a citizen of the world, which is more important than ever in this age of depersonalizing gadgets and antisocial personal devices. "Everything we do, then, has moral overtones. Through dialogue modeling, the provision of practice, and the attribution of best motive, the one-caring as teacher nurtures the ethical idea" (Noddings, 1984, p. 179).

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### Suggested Resources

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### **Appendix A**

#### **Teacher Survey Summer 2010**

Distributed to 50 high school teachers; 31 responses.

1. Do you use contemporary French music in your classes?
2. Do you supplement lessons on culture with Francophone songs or music videos? If so, which songs do you use specifically and how do you use them? What cultural phenomena or differences do they address?
3. Could you give examples of songs or music videos that convey cultural expressions of humor?
4. Songs and music videos often contain narratives that elicit an emotional reaction. Is this important to you? Why or why not? Can you cite examples of songs or music videos that evoke compassion in your students?
5. Do students become more engaged by studying songs with humor, cultural content or emotion? Can you think of any examples in which students were strongly affected by one of these factors or a combination?

### **Appendix B**

#### **Research and discussion questions for the songs discussed in the article**

- A. The research questions prepare the students for listening exercises by giving them background information on topics presented. These questions focus principally on cultural content and cultural comparisons, especially ACTFL **Standard 4.2**: Students demonstrate understanding of the concept of culture through comparisons of the cultures studied and their own (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Projects, 1996).
- B. The discussion questions encourage students to analyze the song lyrics, engage in conversation about cultural topics and trends, personalize and internalize information by putting themselves in the place of the singer or protagonist, debate hot topics such as racism, discrimination, divorce, social networking, patriotism, environmental concerns, immigration, and drinking and driving. These discussion topics are designed to help teachers “enhance the ethical ideal” (Noddings, 1984, p. 178) by encouraging students to reflect on and discuss global and humanitarian issues.

#### **Marc Antoine – *Tant Besoin De Toi***

*Recherche:*

- *Trouvez des statistiques sur le mariage mixte en France et aux USA. Trouvez le taux de divorce de ces mariages mixtes et le taux de divorce des mariages en général.*
- *Faites une liste des couples célèbres mixtes.*



*Discussion:*

- *D'après vos recherches y a-t-il une grande différence entre le taux des mariages mixtes et celui des mariages où l'homme et la femme sont de la même race?*
- *Est-ce que le taux est différent aux USA et en France? À votre avis pourquoi? Pourquoi pas?*
- *À votre avis, pourquoi ces relations sont-elles parfois difficiles?*
- *Imaginez les difficultés auxquelles un couple mixte doit faire face.*

**Marc Antoine – Need You So Much***Research:*

- Find statistics on racially mixed marriages in France and in the U.S. Find statistics on the divorce rate among mixed race couples and married couples in general.
- Make a list of celebrity mixed race couples.

*Discussion:*

- According to your research, is there a big difference in the number of mixed race marriages and that of racially homogenous marriages?
- Is the figure different in France and the U.S.? Why, in your opinion?
- Why do you think that mixed race relationships can be difficult to maintain?
- Imagine the difficulties mixed race couples must face.

**Bel Air Dee Jayz – Tu Fesses B'Hook***Recherche:*

- *Lisez l'article suivant et répondez aux questions ci-dessous: [http://www.lemonde.fr/technologies/article/2010/10/15/reseaux-sociaux-en-france-facebook-le-plus-connu-mais-pas-le-plus-utilise\\_1426929\\_651865.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/technologies/article/2010/10/15/reseaux-sociaux-en-france-facebook-le-plus-connu-mais-pas-le-plus-utilise_1426929_651865.html)*
  - *Quel est le pourcentage d'internautes français qui se déclarent membres d'un site collaboratif?*
  - *Est-ce qu'il y a eu une augmentation depuis 2009?*
  - *Combien d'internautes sont membres de 3 réseaux sociaux en 2010?*
  - *Quel est le réseau social le plus connu? Le deuxième plus connu?*
  - *Nommez un réseau social uniquement français?*
  - *Quel est le site collaboratif le plus utilisé?*
  - *Quel est le placement de Facebook?*

*Discussion:*

- *Faites une liste d'au moins 5 aspects négatifs et positifs de Facebook.*
- *Quels sont les dangers de Facebook?*
- *Combien d'heures passez-vous sur Facebook par jour?*
- *Est-ce que vous avez déjà été offensé(e) par ce qui a été affiché sur votre mur ou sur celui d'un(e) ami(e)?*
- *Comment réagissez-vous quand vos parents ou autres vous disent que vous passez trop de temps sur Facebook?*

### **Bel Air Dee Jayz – You Facebook**

#### Research:

- Read the following article and answer the questions below: [http://www.lemonde.fr/technologies/article/2010/10/15/reseaux-sociaux-en-france-facebook-le-plus-connu-mais-pas-le-plus-utilise\\_1426929\\_651865.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/technologies/article/2010/10/15/reseaux-sociaux-en-france-facebook-le-plus-connu-mais-pas-le-plus-utilise_1426929_651865.html)
- What is the percentage of French people who acknowledge their membership to an online social network?
- Has this number risen since 2009?
- How many French people were members of three online social networks in 2010?
- What is the most famous social network? The second best known?
- Name a French-only social networking website.
- What is the most used social network site?
- What is Facebook's popularity rank amongst French users?

#### Discussion:

- Make a list of at least 5 positive and negative aspects of Facebook.
- What are the dangers of Facebook?
- How many hours a day do you spend on Facebook?
- Have you ever been offended by something that was posted on your or your friend's wall?
- How do you react when parents or other people tell you you spend too much time on Facebook or any other form of social media (texting, instant messaging)?

### **Amel Bent – Je Me Sens Bien**

#### Recherche:

- *Effectuez une recherche sur la vie de la chanteuse Amel Bent*
  - *Sa date et lieu de naissance*
  - *Sa nationalité, celle de ses parents*
  - *Où a-t-elle grandi?*
  - *Comment est-elle devenue célèbre?*
  - *Style de musique*
  - *Drame survenu en 2007*

#### Discussion:

- *Comment réagissez-vous aux immigrants qui critiquent les USA?*
- *Est-il difficile pour un immigré de se soumettre à la culture et aux traditions du pays dans lequel il se trouve?*
- *Si vous viviez dans un autre pays, est-ce qu'il y aurait des traditions américaines que vous aimeriez garder? Lesquelles?*
- *Devenons-nous antipatriotes quand nous critiquons notre propre pays ou gouvernement?*
- *Analysez le refrain de la chanson Je me sens bien d'Amel Bent à la lumière de sa biographie:*

*Je me sens belle  
Je me sens bien  
Je veux crier ma joie de vivre  
Le temps d'un refrain  
Je n'suis plus celle  
Qui pour un rien  
Perdait toute confiance en elle  
Oui, tout ça c'est loin*

### **Amel Bent – I Feel Good**

#### Research:

- Research the French singer Amel Bent's biography
  - Birthdate and birthplace
  - Nationality, parents nationality
  - Where did she grow up?
  - How did she become famous?
  - Style of music
  - Controversy surrounding comments she made in 2007

#### Discussion:

- How do you react to immigrants who criticize the USA?
- Is it difficult for an immigrant to adopt the culture and traditions of his or her adopted country?
- If you lived in another country, would there be any American traditions that you would like to observe? Which ones?
- Can we be called unpatriotic if we criticize our own country or government?
- In the light of her biography, analyze the chorus of Amel Bent's song "I Feel Good"

I feel beautiful  
I feel good  
I want to shout out my love of life  
Right now, in this chorus  
I'm no longer the one  
Who for no reason at all  
Used to lose all my confidence  
Yes, all that is long gone

### **Diam's – Cœur De Bombe**

#### Recherche:

- Recherchez un couple célèbre qui a divorcé (ex: Eva Longoria et Tony Parker).
  - Leur rencontre
  - Leur mariage
  - Leur vie de couple
  - Leur séparation

*Discussion:*

- *Les premiers sentiments quand on tombe amoureux.*
- *Les sentiments changent-ils quand on vit avec quelqu'un depuis un certain moment? Pourquoi?*
- *Quand la routine s'installe est-ce que l'amour disparaît toujours? Expliquez votre réponse.*
- *Les problèmes qui pourraient mener au divorce.*
- *Quels conseils donneriez-vous à de jeunes mariés pour éviter le divorce?*

**Diam's – Exploding Heart**

*Research:*

- Research information on a celebrity couple that is separating or divorcing (ex: Eva Longoria and Tony Parker).
  - How they met
  - Their wedding
  - Their marriage (How long, children, etc.)
  - Their separation

*Discussion:*

- Describe the feelings people have when they first fall in love.
- Do these feelings change when people live together for a certain amount of time? Why?
- When life falls into a routine, does love always disappear? Explain.
- Discuss problems that could lead to a divorce.
- What advice would you give to newlyweds to help them avoid divorce?

**Grand Corps Malade – Je Viens De Là**

*Recherche:*

- *Faites une recherche sur la banlieue parisienne Saint-Denis.*
  - *Où se trouve-t-elle?*
  - *Quels sont les sites importants à visiter?*
  - *Quels restaurants trouve-t-on? Faites une liste de cinq restaurants.*
  - *Quelle est la population principale de cette banlieue?*
- *Comparez la banlieue Saint-Denis avec Harlem aux États-Unis (emplacement, population, pauvreté, sans domicile, immigrés, restaurants, niveau de vie, violence, crime).*

*Discussion:*

- *Donnez les références positives et négatives du quartier.*
- *GCM aime-t-il ou déteste-t-il sa banlieue? Donnez des exemples qui soutiennent votre analyse.*
- *Êtes-vous fier(ière)(s) de l'endroit où vous habitez; le défendriez-vous si quelqu'un l'attaquait?*
- *Donnez les avantages de vivre dans un quartier avec beaucoup de diversité.*
- *Quelles sont les différences entre le SLAM et le Rap? Lequel préférez-vous et pourquoi?*

**Grand Corps Malade – I Come From There**

## Research:

- Research the Parisian suburb of Saint-Denis:
  - Where is it located?
  - What are its important sites and attractions?
  - What kind of restaurants can one find in Saint-Denis? Make a list of five restaurants.
  - Describe the population of Saint-Denis.
- Compare the suburb of Saint-Denis to Harlem in the United States (location, population, poverty level, homelessness, immigrants, restaurants, standard of living, violence, crime).

## Discussion:

- Based on your research and the text of the song, make a list of the positive and negative aspects of the singer's neighborhood.
- Does GCM love or hate his suburb? Give examples that support your analysis.
- Are you proud of the place where you live? Would you defend it if someone put it down?
- List the advantages of living in an area with a lot of diversity.
- What is the difference between SLAM and rap? Which do you prefer and why?

**Keen'V – Explique-Moi***Recherche:*

- *Trouvez le nombre d'adolescents morts en France en 2009 à cause de l'alcool au volant; comparez avec celui des États-Unis. Lequel est le plus élevé et pourquoi à votre avis?*
- *Quel est l'âge où l'on peut conduire en France? Comparez-le à celui des États-Unis.*
- *A quel âge peut-on boire légalement de l'alcool en France et aux États-Unis?*
- *Quel est le taux d'alcoolisme chez les adolescents en France et aux États-Unis?*

*Discussion:*

- *Que pensez-vous de l'âge légal pour la consommation d'alcool en France et aux États-Unis?*
- *Êtes-vous pour ou contre la réduction de l'âge légal pour la consommation d'alcool aux États-Unis? Pourquoi? Pourquoi pas?*
- *Quels sont les dangers de réduire l'âge de la consommation d'alcool?*
- *Pourquoi l'âge de la consommation d'alcool est-il inférieur en France? Est-ce que cela change le taux d'alcoolisme chez les jeunes?*

### **Keen’V – Please Explain**

Research:

- Find statistics on the number and percentage of adolescents who died in France from drinking and driving in 2009; compare this figure to the same statistics in the United States. Which is higher?
- What is the legal driving age in France? And in the U.S.?
- How old do you have to be to drink alcohol legally in France and in the States?
- What is the rate of teen alcoholism in France and in the United States?

Discussion:

- What do you think of the legal age for alcohol consumption in France and the United States?
- Are you for or against lowering the legal age for alcohol consumption in the United States? Why or why not?
- What are the dangers of reducing the age for alcohol consumption?
- Why is the legal drinking age lower in France? Do you think this changes the rate of teen alcoholism?

### **Salif Keïta – *La Différence***

*Recherche:*

- *Définissez le terme “albinos.”*
- *Le pourcentage d’albinos au Mali et comment sont-ils traités?*
- *Où se trouve le Mali ? A-t-il une histoire importante et pourquoi?*
- *Faites une biographie de Salif Keïta et parlez de sa fondation.*

*Discussion:*

- *Comment Keïta, un albinos malien, refuse-t-il la discrimination dans cette chanson?*
- *Pouvez-vous parler de préjugés qui ont mené à la persécution d’un peuple ou d’une minorité religieuse ou ethnique.*
- *Pourquoi pensez-vous que les gens ont peur de la différence?*
- *Que feriez-vous pour changer leur opinion ou leur montrer que la différence peut être une chose positive?*

### **Salif Keïta – *Difference***

Research:

- Define the term “albino.”
- What is the percentage of albinos in Mali, and how are they treated?
- Where is Mali? Research Mali’s glorious past.
- Research the life of Salif Keita and his charitable foundation.

Discussion:

- How does Keïta, a Malian albino, reject discrimination in this song?
- Discuss examples of prejudices that have led to the persecution of people from a religious or ethnic minority.
- Why do you think that people are afraid of difference?

- What would you do to change their opinion or show them that difference can be a positive thing?

**Pascal Obispo – *Idéaliste***

*Recherche:*

- *Comparez la politique de recyclage en France et aux États-Unis.*
- *Faites des recherches sur la biodiversité en France et aux États-Unis.*
- *Comment la France protège-t-elle ses ours? Et en quoi est-ce un modèle pour la protection des animaux en voie de disparition?*

*Discussion:*

- *Que pouvez-vous faire pour moins polluer? Utiliser moins d'énergie?*
- *Comment pourriez-vous convaincre votre famille, vos ami(e)(s) à recycler? Quels sont les conseils ou renseignements que vous leur donneriez?*
- *Pourquoi est-il si nécessaire de conserver nos ressources naturelles (eau, forêts, etc.)?*
- *Pourquoi à votre avis y a-t-il, dans la chanson, beaucoup de références aux années 60-70?*
- *Pourquoi y a-t-il tellement de références à la création d'une armée?*

**Pascal Obispo – *Idealist***

Research:

- Research and compare recycling policies in France and the United States.
- Research biodiversity in France and in the United States.
- How does France protect her bears? How can this be a model for the protection of endangered species?

Discussion:

- What can you do to pollute less? To use less energy?
- How can you convince your family, your friends to recycle? What advice or information would you give them?
- Why is it so important to conserve our natural resources (water, forests, etc.)?
- In your opinion, why are there so many references in the song to the 1960's and 1970's?
- Why are there so many references to the creation of an army?

**Soprano – *Hiro***

*Recherche:*

- *Recherchez où a eu lieu l'accident de voiture de Lady Diana.*
- *Recherchez la course automobile Paris-Dakar et la biographie de Daniel Balavoine.*
- *Recherchez l'organisation Les restos du cœur et la biographie de Coluche.*
- *Recherchez la biographie de Zyed et Bouna.*
- *Recherchez l'île de La Gorée et son rôle dans le commerce triangulaire de l'esclavage.*

*Discussion:*

- *Si vous aviez un pouvoir magique, lequel choisiriez-vous et pourquoi?*
- *Dans la chanson et la série télévisée quel est le pouvoir de Hiro Nakamura? Est-ce qu'il se sert de son pouvoir pour le bien?*
- *Si vous pouviez assister à un événement historique, lequel choisiriez-vous? Pourquoi?*
- *Si vous pouviez changer un événement historique, lequel changeriez-vous? Pourquoi?*

**Soprano – Hiro**

**Research:**

- Research the place in Paris where Lady Diana had her fatal car accident.
- Research the “Paris-Dakar” car race and Daniel Balavoine’s biography.
- Research the organization “The restaurants of the heart” and the biography of its founder Coluche.
- Research the story of Zyed and Bouna.
- Research Gorée Island and its role in the Triangular Commerce and slavery.

**Discussion:**

- If you had a magical power, what would you want it to be and why?
- In the song and the television series, what is Hiro Nakamura’s power? Does he use his power for good?
- If you could witness a historical event, what would it be? Why?
- If you could change an event in history, what would it be? Why?



# 8

## Language Portfolio Sampling: Selective Application at the Post-Secondary Level

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### Introduction

Prior to the 1970s the major focus of applied linguistics research was the classroom context, with particular attention paid to classroom-based methods. Teachers and researchers were interested in knowing which method, such as audiolingualism or grammar-translation, would lead to the greatest level of proficiency for the largest number of students. Somewhere during this decade, however, attention began to slowly turn away from the method and classroom process toward the language learner (White, 2008). One example of this shift is our profession's increased interest in individual learning strategies (Oxford, 1990).

With the growing interest in the language learner also came a new vision of the student as an active manager of his or her learning. This vision sees the student as an invested learner who actively participates in, and to a large extent, controls his or her own learning. In other words, it considers language learners to be “active agents who evaluate [...] their environments and then create, select, and make use of tasks, experiences, and interlocutors in keeping with their needs, preferences, and goals as learners” (White, 2008, p. 7).

A number of studies have since demonstrated the importance of the active, engaged, and autonomous learner in effective language learning. Moreover, these studies advocate the cultivation of student engagement, reflection, and

metacognitive awareness-raising in the language learning process (Dam, 1995; Esch, 1996; Holec, 1981; Little, 2001; Murphy, 2008; White, 1995). For Murphy (2008, p. 307), it is increasingly clear “that across learning contexts, those learners who are proactive in pursuit of language learning appear to learn best.”

One tool that can be used to encourage proactive student involvement and investment in learning is the language learning portfolio. While a portfolio can be little more than a “box or folder that contains various kinds of information that has been gathered over time about one student” (Freeman & Freeman, 1994, p. 259), it has the potential to be much more. For example, portfolios can demonstrate authentic language use at a single point or across a period of time, within a single class, or across levels of language study. As such, its use as a medium of assessment has been both varied and profound (Al Kahtani, 1999; Cummins & Davesne, 2009; Delett, Bernhardt, & Kevorkian, 2001; Luke, 2005; Padilla, Aninao, & Sung, 1996). The portfolio, however, is not merely a progressive assessment tool, it also has the potential to actively involve the learner in both the learning and the assessment processes:

Portfolio assessment is an ongoing, interactive assessment that actively involves both the teacher and the student in the process of learning. With the recent shift in foreign language education away from teacher-centered instruction, the focus now situates on learner capabilities. In this environment, both teachers and students find themselves in new roles with new responsibilities. Portfolios are one means of developing a learner-centered classroom. (Delett, Bernhardt, & Kevorkian, 2001, p. 360)

According to Luke (2005), the portfolio has become an increasingly popular assessment tool because it provides a framework for documenting, organizing, and reflecting, and it gives students increased ownership of both their work and their learning.

### **European Language Portfolio/LinguaFolio**

One of the most widely-known language learning portfolio models, and one that promotes critical self-reflection and student involvement and ownership of learning, is the European Language Portfolio (Council of Europe [COE], 1993). Created by the Council of Europe in 1993, the European Language Portfolio is constructed by and belongs to the learner. As of 2009, 99 unique European Language Portfolio templates had been validated (Cummins & Davesne, 2009). However, each version follows a common set of guidelines and must contain the following three sections: (1) a language biography, or a record of a student’s language learning history; (2) a language dossier, a collection of selected artifacts and attestations selected by the student in order to document and illustrate language skills and achievement; and (3) a language passport, a record of formal achievements (Van Houten, 2007). While there are numerous specific templates in use, all versions provide learners with positively worded “can-do” checklists

in order to help them assess language skills and set personal goals within the language biography.

Using the European Language Portfolio as a model, the National Council of State Supervisors for Languages spearheaded the LinguaFolio project in the United States in 2003. The goals of this initiative were to “promote reflective, autonomous language learning and cultural interaction through self-assessment, facilitate articulation within and among institutions, [and] address the needs of an increasingly independent, online, and lifelong learner population” (Van Houten, 2007, p.15). Like the European Language Portfolio, LinguaFolio contains three components: 1) the language passport; 2) the language biography; and 3) the dossier. Like the European Language Portfolio, the language biography in LinguaFolio employs “can-do” statements for each level. However, instead of using the Common European Framework of Reference levels (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2), LinguaFolio is calibrated to the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) scale (Novice, Intermediate, Advanced, Superior, Distinguished) and uses ACTFL’s skill areas, while breaking the speaking skill into both spoken production and spoken interaction.

Versions of LinguaFolio, initially named LinguaFolioUSA!, have been piloted in several states--originally in Virginia, Nebraska, Kentucky, and Indiana. LinguaFolio Nebraska, for example, targeted learners in grades 7-12, while LinguaFolio Kentucky focused on early language learners. In Virginia, on the other hand, one of the target populations has been the university-level learner. Regardless of the level of the learner, all iterations of LinguaFolio seek to “build effective learners who become active in the management of their own learning and who become independent learners with the ability to self-regulate” (Moeller, Scow, & Van Houten, 2005, p. 138). While the pilot projects originally used notebook portfolios, Blackboard-based and other ePortfolio versions have since been developed.

### **Global Language Portfolio**

As LinguaFolio grew out of the European Language Portfolio in order to better fit the needs of an American audience, so did the Global Language Portfolio grow out of LinguaFolio. However, as “LinguaFolio development progressed, differing needs of K-12 and university learners became more recognized” (Cummins & Davesne, 2009, p. 855). As a result, the need for a university-level version of the portfolio was acknowledged and a new iteration, entitled the Global Language Portfolio, was created and piloted at Virginia Commonwealth University. While LinguaFolio, with its K-12 focus, uses a single set of checklists referencing the ACTFL scale within its biography component, the Global Language Portfolio gives learners the option of assessing themselves according to the American ACTFL scale, the Common European Framework of Reference scale, or both. In fact, the Global Language Portfolio intentionally “used the word *global* in its title because it allows [one] to reference either the Common European Framework of Reference or the ACTFL scale” (Cummins & Davesne, 2009, p. 855, emphasis added).

According to the Global Language Portfolio website (Cummins, 2008-2009), the five Cs of the National Standards and the communication checklists are at the heart of the Global Language Portfolio's language biography. Specifically, the language biography checklists "provide an updatable self-assessment of a learner's language skills in listening, reading, writing, spoken production, and spoken interaction, and they allow the learner to identify his or her next communication goals." The checklists in the Global Language Portfolio also use positively worded can-do statements referring to both performance tasks and strategies in order to facilitate articulation from the K-12 *LinguaFolio* version to the post-secondary level. Indeed, the checklists "are compatible and provide a smooth transition from *LinguaFolio* in high school to the Global Language Portfolio at the university-level (Cummins, 2008-2009).

The Global Language Portfolio's copyright is held by the American Association of Teachers of French (AATF), but it is readily available for use and can be accessed through the AATF Global Language Portfolio website. The AATF, along with the Commission on Colleges and Universities, encourages its use and is attempting to track applications in order to obtain feedback and encourage collaboration with other stakeholders in the United States and abroad. One attempt to apply a portion of the post-secondary-focused Global Language Portfolio outside of its home state of Virginia is described below.

### **An Application**

Seeking new tools for assessing department learning objectives and promoting student engagement in the language learning process--more specifically seeking ways to encourage students to plan, reflect upon, and assess their own language learning, the author targeted the biography component of the Global Language Portfolio. Indeed, "more than any other part of [the portfolio], the biography allows learners to develop their own goals and to devise strategies to achieve them" (Cummins, 2007, p. 119). Because not all faculty members in the department were ready to fully embrace a sophisticated portfolio system in all levels of language study (elementary undergraduate language through the undergraduate major and Master's levels), the selective application of the biography alone, rather than the entire portfolio system, was pursued.

As noted above, the Global Language Portfolio's biography offers two versions of a self-assessment checklist: one aligned with American ACTFL scale that is 24 pages long, and another fitting the Common European Framework of Reference scale that is 15 pages in length. Each set of checklists targets the following skills in the following order: listening, reading, spoken interaction, spoken production, and writing. The Common European Framework of Reference version of the self-assessment checklist breaks down each skill into the following levels: Level A Basic User (A1, A2); Level B Independent User (B1, B2); Level C Proficient User (C1, C2). The ACTFL version of the checklist uses the following more familiar levels: Novice-Low (NL), Novice-Mid (NM), Novice-High (NH), Intermediate-Low (IL), Intermediate-Mid (IM), Intermediate-High (IH), Advanced-Low (AL), Advanced-Mid (AM), Advanced-High (AH), Superior (S), and Distinguished (D).

While both checklists use positively worded can-do statements, the specific statements are not identical. The abilities they target, however, tend to be quite similar. For example, the Level A1 Basic User level for listening on the Common European Framework of Reference version states “I can understand basic greetings, such as hello, good-bye, and how I am doing,” while the Novice-Low ACTFL version for listening states “I can recognize a few short, familiar phrases, such as those meaning hello, good-bye, or thank you.” While similar in many respects, the simple fact that the Common European Framework of Reference version employs six levels (A1, A1, B1, B2, C1, C2) whereas the ACTFL version uses 10 (NM, NH, IL, IM, IH, AL, AM, AH, S, D), makes direct comparisons rather cumbersome.

When deciding which of the two versions of the self-assessment checklist to employ, the initial inclination was to use the ACTFL model, because its levels are more familiar to educators in the United States and possibly more familiar to students who may have used *LinguaFolio* or been exposed to other ACTFL-inspired documents in high school. However, when given the choice, the students unanimously chose the shorter of the two versions, or that of the Common European Framework of Reference. The Common European Framework of Reference model of the self-assessment checklist was copied and administered during the final two weeks of the spring 2010 semester to a first-semester elementary French I course, a fourth-semester intermediate French II course, and a senior-level advanced French conversation course at the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

## Outcomes

The results of the Global Language Portfolio’s Common European Framework of Reference self-assessment checklist (COE, 2001) for each level of post-secondary French by specific skill area are presented in Tables 1, 2, and 3 below. Results are presented in terms of percentage of students who responded affirmatively to the can-do statements at each of the six levels (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2).

**Table 1.** First-Semester Language Learners: First-Semester Self-Assessment by Skill

Listening	Reading	Spoken Interaction	Spoken Production	Writing
A1=96.0%	A1=98.0%	A1=91.0%	A1=94.0%	A1=85.0%
A2=64.0%	A2=78.0%	A2=65.0%	A2=89.0%	A2=71.0%
B1=40.8%	B1=58.0%	B1=35.6%	B1=26.9%	B1=22.6%
B2=15.6%	B2=17.0%	B2=15.6%	B2=8.6%	B2=4.3%
C1=6.0%	C1=6.9%	C1=2.6%	C1=2.6%	C1=0.8%
C2=1.7%	C2=3.4%	C2=2.6%	C2=2.6%	C2=1.7%

*Course Goals:* According to department learning objectives, students completing a first-semester elementary course will be able to: introduce themselves and others, greet people appropriately, and carry on simple interaction in commercial settings. In terms of reading and writing skills, these students will be able to: understand

short, simple written texts or messages; write simple sentences using connectors such as *et, mais, d'abord, ensuite* [and, but, first, next]; and write simple letters or texts about experiences and events. In terms of speaking and writing, students at this level will be able to: express likes and dislikes; describe people, places, and things; describe daily activities; express future events; make basic comparisons; talk about events in the recent past; exchange basic personal information (name, address, phone number, age, etc.); express time; describe hobbies and interests in a simple way; ask formulaic questions and yes/no questions; and answer basic questions about familiar topics.

*Findings:* As Table 1 above demonstrates, the majority of first-semester students categorized themselves as being at the A1/A2 level in each of the five skills, as well as at the B1 level in reading (58%). According to the Common European Framework, students at the A2 level:

Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information or familiar routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment, and matters in areas of immediate need. (COE, 2001)

The fact that first-semester students rated themselves at the A2 level is not surprising and, in fact, is in line with the department learning objectives and expectations for this level.

**Table 2.** Second-Year Language Learners: Fourth-Semester (Second-Year) Self-Assessment by Skill

<b>Listening</b>	<b>Reading</b>	<b>Spoken Interaction</b>	<b>Spoken Production</b>	<b>Writing</b>
A1=98.0%	A1=100.0%	A1=100.0%	A1=100.0%	A1=98.00%
A2=87.0%	A2=88.0%	A2=89.0%	A2=99.5%	A2=96.00%
B1=48.0%	B1=58.7%	B1=60.0%	B1=67.5%	B1=53.70%
B2=30.0%	B2=50.0%	B2=47.5%	B2=21.0%	B2=17.50%
C1=13.0%	C1=35.0%	C1=2.5%	C1=25.0%	C1=3.70%
C2=1.2%	C2=5.0%	C2=0.0%	C2=0.0%	C2=1.25%

*Course Goals:* In addition to the list of abilities expected from first-semester learners, students in a second-year fourth-semester class are expected to be able to: understand and contribute to extended group discussion on familiar topics; write clear, detailed, and well supported narratives on a variety of topics; write basic professional and business letters; express basic hypothetical scenarios; differentiate between real/concrete and hypothetical people/places/things/ideas/events in both oral and written discourse; and express basic temporal/spatial relationships both orally and in writing.

*Findings:* The results from the second-year (fourth-semester) students were more surprising than those from the first-semester course. The majority of the second-year students also categorized themselves as being at the A1/A2 level in each of the five skills, with a very slight majority reaching the B1 level for reading (58%), spoken interaction (60%), spoken production (67.5), and writing (53%). The department learning objectives for the second-year course, on the other hand, more closely match those of the B1 level. According to the Common European Framework, students at the B1 level:

Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst traveling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected texts on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes, and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans. (COE, 2001)

Unfortunately, instead of having a clear majority of students self-report at the B1 level for all skills, the second-year students self-reported most strongly at the A2 level, with a slight majority reaching the B1 level for certain skills.

**Table 3.** Fourth-Year (Major) Language Learners: Fourth-Year Self-Assessment by Skill

<b>Listening</b>	<b>Reading</b>	<b>Spoken Interaction</b>	<b>Spoken Production</b>	<b>Writing</b>
A1=100.0%	A1=100.0%	A1=100.0%	A1=100.0%	A1=100.0%
A2=100.0%	A2=100.0%	A2=100.0%	A2=100.0%	A2=100.0%
B1=100.0%	B1=98.3%	B1=100.0%	B1=100.0%	B1=95.0%
B2=81.6%	B2=91.6%	B2=81.6%	B2=90.0%	B2=78.0%
C1=51.6%	C1=33.0%	C1=48.3%	C1=61.6%	C1=45.0%
C2=30.0%	C2=43.3%	C2=26.6%	C2=33.0%	C2=35.0%

*Course Goals:* Students in the fourth-year of the major are expected to be able to do all that is expected from the second-year students as well as: understand idiomatic expressions and slang in the dialect in which they are most familiar; give personal and professional presentations and respond appropriately to questions; understand the gist of films, TV programs, music, and other media produced for native speakers; synthesize information from different sources in order to write clear and well-supported essays (including short research papers on a variety of familiar and unfamiliar topics); create and self-edit texts with a high degree of grammatical accuracy for a variety of audiences; identify reliable sources of information and appropriately cite them in academic writing; recognize different literary devices and genres; and appropriately use formal and informal language according to the oral or written context.

*Findings:* The majority of the advanced fourth-year students categorized themselves at the B2 level in each of the five skills, with a slight majority reaching the C1 level in listening (51.6%) and spoken production (61.6%). According to the Common European Framework, students at the B2 level:

Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialization. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving advantages and disadvantages of various options. (COE, 2001)

While the department learning objectives for the advanced level certainly encompass the B2 ability level described above and identified by the majority of advanced students, they also approximate those of the C1 level wherein students:

Can understand a wide range of demanding longer texts, and recognize implicit meaning. Can express themselves fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic, and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organizational patterns, connectors, and cohesive devices. (COE, 2001)

Therefore, based on their self-assessments, most students at the advanced level tended to fall slightly short of the stated department objectives. For example, instead of a clear, strong majority of advanced students reaching the C1 level in all skill areas, the C1 scores were 51.6% for listening, 33% for reading, 48.3% for spoken interaction, 61.6% for spoken production, and 45% for writing.

## **Conclusion**

Student self-assessments of language skills at three different levels of post-secondary French using the Common European Framework of Reference checklist produced results that are generally fitting with the department learning objectives at these same levels. Specifically, beginning students rated themselves at the A2 level, which matched department objectives. Students at the second-year level identified most closely with the A2 level, with some approximations to the B1 level. This self-assessment falls slightly short of, but closely approximates, department outcome objectives for this course level. Advanced fourth-year students most ostensibly rated themselves at the B2 level, with some students reaching the C1 level in specific skill areas. This outcome falls somewhat short of department objectives for a slight majority of students in the upper-level course.

Armed with this information, faculty members in French will need to revisit curriculum and pedagogy in order to make changes that can help students meet the stated objectives for each level of instruction. Based on the information gained from this portfolio application, much of the upcoming discussions will need



to concentrate on the teaching and learning at the intermediate and advanced levels. Moreover, the findings of this application will also assist faculty members in focusing their attention on specific language skills within these two levels of instruction. For example, based on the results presented above, faculty members now know that students at the advanced level feel that they are falling short of the stated objectives in reading comprehension more so than in the other skill areas. Faculty members also now know that students at the intermediate level are least sure of their listening comprehension abilities.

While this information is valuable to faculty members as they seek to continually improve the curriculum and student outcomes for each level of instruction, assessment is not the only objective of this application. By reflecting upon what they know and are able to do in each skill using can-do statements, students have an opportunity to become involved and engaged in the language learning process. Indeed, this activity gives learners a chance to reflect on their abilities and goals, thereby promoting metacognitive awareness and ownership of their language learning. They too are now more aware of the skill areas where they might want to spend time and devote additional attention.

According to White (2008), educators should “raise students’ awareness and knowledge of themselves, their learning needs and preferences, their beliefs and motivation, and the strategies they use to develop target language competence” (p. 3). Not only is the language learning portfolio one means of cultivating student autonomy, awareness, and engagement in the language learning process, but selected components thereof, such as the language learning biography from the Global Language Portfolio, LinguaFolio, or the European Language Portfolio can be successfully employed as stand-alone features as well.

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**Suggested Further Readings**

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# 9

## Performance Assessments for the World Language Classroom

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With an increased demand to prepare students to be marketable in a global economy of the twenty-first century, world language teachers are faced with an exciting opportunity to help students develop written and oral language communication skills. Students in world language classrooms perform best when they are motivated to produce language for real purposes or reasons that “would be plausible in their lives outside of the classroom” (Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition [CARLA], 2009). In order to make instructional decisions to enhance student learning, teachers need to assess student achievement. According to Stiggins (2008), “Instructional decisions that contribute the most to student success are, in fact, not made by the adults... but by students themselves” (p. 17), and in order for students to see that success in learning is possible and realistic, they need clear explanations on how they are going to be assessed.

### Validity

One way to look at the value of an assessment is to examine the accuracy and usefulness of its results. According to Gronlund (1998), validity is “the extent to which inferences made from assessment results...are meaningful and useful in terms of the purpose of the assessment” (p. 226). Teachers must know why they conduct assessments and who is going to use the results. As Stiggins (2008)

points out, every assessment “must serve its intended user well” (p. 40). Another way of looking at assessment validity is how well the instrument measures what it proposes to measure. According to Brown and Abeywickrama (2010), assessments are considered to have high validity in content when they sample the objectives of the subject matter by measuring directly student performance on the tasks which were practiced in the lessons.

This paper deals with the classroom level of assessment that informs the decisions of its users: teachers, students, and parents (Stiggins, 2008). Some of these decisions call for formative assessments that support student progress and growth. These assessments “help form or shape learners’ ongoing understanding or skills while the teacher and learners still have opportunities to interact for the purposes of repair and improvement within the instructional setting” (Shrum & Glisan, 2005, p. 361). Summative assessments, on the other hand, are designed to determine what students can do with the language after a period of time, such as the end of a unit, term, or course. Both formative and summative assessments are needed in order to determine what instructional strategies to use to help students grow and how these strategies lead to successful student performance.

### **Reliability**

Another sign of quality in an assessment is its ability to provide consistent results (Stiggins, 2008). According to Brown and Abeywickrama (2010), “If you give the same test to the same student or matched students on different occasions, the test will yield similar results” (p. 27). For example, an advanced Spanish class gets a certain average score on a test of reading comprehension, and if the test is reliable, the same class gets a similar score if this test is administered two weeks later. As Stiggins (2008) suggests, “A dependable and reliable assessment will reflect that stable level of achievement no matter how many times we measure it” (p. 15). When proficiency improves, so do the assessment results that show this improvement.

### **Performance Assessment**

The purpose of this article is to help world language teachers create valid and reliable performance assessments and specifically, develop performance tasks and scoring rubrics to assess language and content. As Stiggins (2008) points out, “Performance assessments involve students in activities that require them actually to demonstrate performance of certain skills or to create products that meet certain standards of quality” (p. 155). According to Popham (2005), performance assessment is “an approach to measuring a student’s status based on the way that the student completes a specified task” (p. 177). Performance assessments dominate every subject area and, they must follow the guidelines of task design and performance criteria. In language classrooms, performance-based assessments typically involve “oral production, written production, open-ended responses, integrated performance (across skill areas), group performance, and other interactive tasks” (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010, p. 16).

As with any assessment of student learning, great care must be taken in the selection of a purpose and a vision of the student achievement the performance assessment is supposed to measure. All assessments require a selection of a proper target, development of a proper sample of performance tasks and scoring rubrics, and attention to all possible sources of bias (Stiggins, 2008).

In order for performance assessments to serve their intended purpose, teachers need to decide what learning targets to address and how it correlates to what has been discussed and practiced in the classroom during the instruction. It is unfair to ask students to demonstrate their skills and create tangible products as part of a formal or graded assessment if they have never been exposed to these assessments before (Stiggins, 2008).

According to CARLA (2009), performance-based assessments are “contextualized, authentic, task based, and learner centered” (p. 3). They provide tasks with a communicative purpose for a real audience and incorporate students’ interests, backgrounds, language development, and cognitive maturity.

### **Developing Performance Tasks**

In order for performance-based assessments to be valid and reliable, a careful consideration should be given to how a performance task is created and assessed. The following sections in the article elaborate on the development of performance tasks, performance criteria for a unit of instruction, and the use of technology in creating and evaluating performance tasks.

To illustrate the tasks, the author chose a unit from a high school Spanish I course; however, the suggestions can be incorporated into any beginning language course. The unit is based on the topic of “My friends and I” and lasts approximately five days. The objectives for the learners are to talk about activities that they like and do not like to do, to describe personality traits, to ask others what they like to do, and to analyze cultural perspectives on leisure activities. After the introduction and practice activities, students are ready to apply what they have learned in a theme-based, communicative context. There are several options for teachers to consider:

- Students read about favorite activities of teenagers from Latin American countries who are looking for on-line pals (ePals, Inc., 2010) in the U.S and write about their own. Teachers arrange ePal correspondence with Spanish-speaking students in a synchronous (via Skype (2010) or free Elluminate (2010) software) or asynchronous form (via e-mail). As an alternative, teachers can establish communication with a Spanish class in a different school.
- Students create a scrapbook using photos of their friends and themselves and write captions underneath the photos. Then they give an oral presentation describing personal traits of the people in the photos and their likes and dislikes.
- Students create a Friend poster or a showcase to illustrate personal traits and likes and dislikes of their friends with drawings, pictures from maga-

zines, and actual photos of friends and write key words or phrases under each visual. Students present their visuals to class and display them in the classroom after their presentations.

- Students research one of the Spanish-speaking countries and then describe the people and what they like to do in their free time. Internet websites, culturally relevant books and magazines can be used to research a particular country and create a visual and an oral presentation or a written response.

These activities are alternative means for demonstrating student understanding of vocabulary, grammar, and culture, compared to a traditional unit exam or test. Such activities can be evaluated with performance assessments in which students demonstrate their knowledge, reasoning, and performance skills.

Arter and Chappuis (2006) suggest three criteria to keep in mind for developing performance assessments: content of the task, sampling, and distortion due to bias. First, teachers need to outline all the requirements of the task, such as the content, the materials, the timeline for completion, and the conditions under which the performance takes place (if a task involves more than one day, the type of help that is allowed). Second, instructors need to determine whether the number of tasks is sufficient to measure the learning target in mind. Finally, teachers need to examine what factors can interfere with the accuracy of the intended results. These factors may include the following: (1) unclear and ambiguous instructions of the task, (2) the task is too broad to accomplish in the time allotted, (3) resources to complete the task may not be available to all students, (4) the task depends on the skills unrelated to the learning target being measured, or (5) the successful completion depends on one particular linguistic or cultural background. Another bias may arise if the assignment allows students to choose different tasks with different levels of difficulty, the tasks do not relate to the same learning target, and/or are administered under different conditions (Arter & Chappuis, 2006).

The following are examples that incorporate the above-mentioned criteria for creating valid and reliable performance tasks. As with any assessment, performance assessments are valid only when they reflect the goals of instructional programs.

### **Examples of Oral and Written Performance Tasks**

#### *Task 1: Postcard*

**Task:** Your friend is going to Mexico and will visit your Mexican pen pal's home town during the summer break. Your pen pal has already agreed to show your friend around. Write a postcard to your pen pal in Mexico and describe your friend. Include his or her age, personal characteristics, and likes and dislikes.

**Directions:** Today you will write a postcard and demonstrate what you have learned to describe a person and express likes and dislikes. Before beginning to write, think about what you plan to say in your postcard and keep in mind that the space is limited to six complete sentences. Leave time at the end to look over your postcard to make corrections if needed. You will have 15 minutes to complete



this assignment. You may only use a pencil. An actual postcard will be provided. Write in full sentences in Spanish and describe your friend, his or her personal characteristics, and activities he or she likes and does not like to do. Use at least 12 different vocabulary words you learned in this unit. Your postcard should have a clear introduction, a body, and a conclusion. Pay attention to capitalization and punctuation. This assignment is going to be assessed with a rubric. (The rubrics are discussed later in the article).

Oral performance tasks can be constructed in the same manner. Students have a copy of a speaking task and they hear a statement or a question in the target language. After listening to the prompt, they record their speaking with a tape recorder or a computer application program. The following computer programs which can be accessed free of charge or at a low cost per month, allow to download pictures and record voice to individualize the messages for later access by the teacher or the students.

- *Audacity* (2010), available at <http://audacity.sourceforge.net/>, enables recording and editing sounds and adding effects to sound/voice.
- *Cinch* (CinchCast, 2010), available at <http://www.cinchcast.com/>, enables creating and sharing audio, text, and photo updates using one's phone or computer.
- *Fotobabble* (2010), available at <http://www.fotobabble.com/>, enables downloading photos and recording voice to share with others.
- *VoiceThread* (2010), available at <http://voicethread.com/>, allows to create multimedia slides and leave comments using voice (with a microphone or telephone), to include text, audio files or video (via a webcam), which can be shared with others.
- *Voki* (Oddcast, Inc., 2008), available at <http://www.voki.com/>, enables creating personalized speaking avatars and use them on one's blog, profile, or in e-mail messages.
- *Wetoku* (2010), available at <http://wetoku.com/>, is an interview tool that automatically records the voice to play it back. One can embed it, share it with others and track every edit and change that are made by other users.

### *Task 2: Introduction to an ePal*

**Task:** Your Spanish-speaking ePal wants to know where you are from, how old you are, your personal characteristics, and what you like to do in your free time. Introduce yourself to your ePal.

**Directions:** You have learned how to introduce yourself to others and describe your leisure activities in the Spanish class. Today you will “meet” and “talk to” your ePal online. Think about what to include in your introduction and how to make a good impression. You may want to write down your ideas in preparation for your presentation. Your speaking time is limited to five minutes. Use only Spanish and say clearly at least six complete sentences. No reading is allowed. You will have 20 minutes to prepare for this assignment. This oral presentation is going to be assessed with a rubric.

### **Developing Performance Criteria**

In order to administer performance assessments that are valid and reliable, teachers use scoring guides in the form of a rubric. A rubric conveys teacher expectations and serves as a means of student self-assessment. It is a guide that uses a scale to differentiate among levels of performance in response to a performance task (Stiggins, 2008). Rubrics define the main traits of a task and specify the level of student performance considered satisfactory in demonstrating each trait.

According to Arter and Chappuis (2006), a rubric's criteria should be easily understood and followed by both students and teachers, including each score point (level) defined with descriptors and/or indicators. Moreover, wording in the level categories needs to be descriptive rather than evaluative (such as "mediocre," "smart," and so on) to ensure a high level of inter-rater reliability (when two or more independent experienced raters assign the same rating most of the time). It is true that oral tasks, such as interviews, discussions, and speeches, can be very subjective based on pure observation. It can be challenging not only to "describe what 'outstanding' performance looks like, but also to map each of the different levels of performance leading up to the highest levels" (Stiggins, 2008, p. 164). It is highly advisable that teachers use descriptive language and examples of student work to define each level of proficiency.

Since students are to use these rubrics to prepare for a performance-based assessment, student-friendly versions are given to them at the beginning of a unit. To develop their own rubrics, teachers have to analyze students' performance skill(s) or product(s) they wish to evaluate and find their essential ingredients. This can be done individually or with colleagues and students. To help guide teachers in a rubric development, Stiggins (2008) has outlined the following five steps in devising performance criteria:

1. Discover – Analyze examples of performance to uncover key attributes.
2. Condense – Pool the resulting ideas into a coherent but concise and original set of key attributes.
3. Define – Develop simple definitions of the key attributes and devise performance continuums for each.
4. Apply – Practice applying performance evaluation procedures to be consistent.
5. Refine – Always remain open to the possibility that criteria might need to be revised. (p. 173)

### **Examples of Scoring Rubrics**

Brown and Abeywickrama (2010) maintain that "classroom evaluation of learning is best served through analytical scoring..." (p. 284). In analytical rubrics, specific multiple scales are used to evaluate dimensions of performance with separate sub-scores assigned to each dimension (Stiggins, 2008). In this paper, examples of analytical rubrics are shown for the tasks in the above-mentioned unit of instruction.

## Rubric for Task 1: Writing a Postcard

Criteria	Distinguished 4	Proficient 3	Basic 2	Emerging 1	Unsatisfactory 0
The use of vocabulary	At least 12 thematic vocabulary words are used. All words are used appropriately to accomplish the purpose of the task. There is variety across parts of speech in thematic vocabulary in all sentences.	At least 9 thematic vocabulary words are used. Most of the words are used appropriately to accomplish the purpose of the task. There is a variety across parts of speech in thematic vocabulary in most sentences.	At least 6 thematic vocabulary words are used. Some of the words are used appropriately to accomplish the purpose of the task. There is some variety across parts of speech in thematic vocabulary in some sentences.	At least 3 thematic vocabulary words are used. Few of the words are used appropriately to accomplish the purpose of the task. There is minimal variety across parts of speech in thematic vocabulary in most sentences.	Fewer than 3 thematic vocabulary words are used. Most of the words are not used appropriately to accomplish the purpose of the task. There is no variety across parts of speech in thematic vocabulary.
Grammar	All sentences demonstrate accurate agreement of grammatical parts of speech, correct use of articles, correct word order, and proper capitalization and punctuation.	Most sentences demonstrate accurate agreement of grammatical parts of speech, correct use of articles, correct word order, and proper capitalization and punctuation.	Some sentences demonstrate accurate agreement of grammatical parts of speech, correct articles, correct word order, and proper capitalization and punctuation.	Few sentences demonstrate accurate agreement of grammatical parts of speech, correct articles, correct word order, and proper capitalization and punctuation.	Almost all sentences are inaccurate in agreement of grammatical parts of speech, use incorrect articles, use incorrect word order, and do not follow the rules of capitalization and punctuation.
Organization	All ideas are fully developed and logically organized.	Most ideas are developed and logically organized.	Some ideas are developed and logically organized.	Few ideas are developed and logically organized.	The ideas are incomplete and not logically organized.
<b>TOTAL:</b>					___/12 pts

**Rubric for Task 2: Introduction to an ePal**

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Distinguished 4v</b>	<b>Proficient 3</b>	<b>Basic 2</b>	<b>Emerging 1</b>	<b>Unsatisfac- tory 0</b>
<b>Vocabulary</b>	All required thematic vocabulary is used appropriately throughout the presentation.	Most required vocabulary is used appropriately throughout the presentation.	Only some of the required vocabulary is used, or some of its use may not serve the purpose of the presentation.	The required vocabulary use is minimal and/or the vocabulary is used incorrectly in most sentences.	The required vocabulary is missing and/or used incorrectly in all sentences.
<b>Grammar</b>	All sentences are accurate in subject/verb agreement, noun/adjective agreement, the use of correct articles, and the word order.	Most sentences are accurate in subject/verb agreement, noun/adjective agreement, the use of correct articles, and the word order.	Some sentences are accurate in subject/verb agreement, noun/adjective agreement, the use of correct articles, and the word order.	Most sentences have errors in subject/verb agreement, and/or noun/adjective agreement, the use of articles, and the word order.	Most sentences are inaccurate in subject/verb agreement, noun/adjective agreement, the use of articles, and the word order.
<b>Organization</b>	All ideas are logically sequenced, and appropriate transitions are used throughout the presentation.	For the most part, ideas are logically sequenced, and appropriate transitions are used for most of the presentation.	Some ideas are sequenced, and sometimes transitions are inconsistent or inappropriate for the presentation.	Ideas are minimally sequenced, and transitions are almost non-existent.	Ideas are minimally formulated and not sequenced, and transitions are absent throughout the presentation.
<b>Presentation</b>	Speech flows naturally; eye contact is maintained throughout the presentation; the ideas are articulated clearly with appropriate volume at all times.	Speech flow is generally fluent, with occasional brief pauses; appropriate amount of eye contact is present with minimal instances of looking down or away from the audience; the ideas are articulated with appropriate volume most of the time.	Speech flow is sometimes disrupted by the student's search for words; eye contact is present with some instances of looking down or away from the audience; sometimes the ideas are not clearly articulated, and the volume is uneven at times.	Speech is hesitant and is frequently disrupted by the student's search for words; eye contact is limited many instances of looking down or away from the audience; the ideas are not clearly articulated, and the volume is uneven for the most part.	Speech is fragmentary; the pauses are long, frequent, and unnatural; there is no eye contact; the ideas are not clearly articulated and the speech is mostly inaudible.
<b>TOTAL:</b>					____/16 pts

## Internet Resources

Creating performance assessments can take a considerable amount of time to develop and execute. Fortunately, there are numerous free websites where teachers can find tips as well as specific examples for developing performance tasks and rubrics.

### *Task and Rubric Development Resources*

The following list of websites provides useful resources for task and rubric development:

- **Fairfax County Public Schools** (1996) website, available at <http://www.fcps.edu/DIS/OHSICS/forlang/PALS/rubrics/index.htm>, focuses on performance assessments for language students and has a section on rubrics which offers generic, analytic, and holistic scales for the interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational modes.
- **Prince George's County Public School** (2010) website, available at <http://www.pgcps.pg.k12.md.us/~elc/developingtasks.html>, describes the characteristics of effective performance assessment tasks and scoring options.
- **Kathy Schrock's Guide for Educators**, namely the **Teacher Helpers Page: Assessment and Rubric Information** (2010), available at <http://school.discoveryeducation.com/schrockguide/assess.html>, provides a comprehensive list of rubrics for specific purposes.
- **University of Wisconsin-Stout–Rubrics for Assessment** (2010) website, available at <http://www.uwstout.edu/soe/profdev/rubrics.shtml>, provides a variety of sample rubrics for different age levels and subject areas and a variety of technology-supported rubrics.

### *Digital Resources for Creating Performance Assessments and Rubrics*

- **ClassWeb Rubric Builder**, available at <http://landmark-project.com/> (Warlick, 2009), is a free service for the Landmark Project for teachers. Teachers can construct rubrics or find existing rubrics developed by other teachers.
- **RubiStar** (ALTEC at University of Kansas, 2008), available at <http://rubistar.4teachers.org/>, is a free website with a tutorial on data analysis to help determine which tasks are too difficult for students. It also provides software to create rubrics for project-based learning activities in many subject matter areas.
- **Teachnology's Rubric Generator** (Teachnology, Inc., 2010), available at [http://www.teach-nology.com/web\\_tools/rubrics/](http://www.teach-nology.com/web_tools/rubrics/), helps teachers create rubrics online (examples need to be modified for world languages).
- **Tech4Learning** (2010), namely **Recipes4Success** website, available at [http://myt4l.com/index.php?v=pl&page\\_ac=view&type=tools&tool=rubricmaker](http://myt4l.com/index.php?v=pl&page_ac=view&type=tools&tool=rubricmaker), helps teachers find sample rubrics for different age levels and provides software to create rubrics.

## Conclusion

This article outlines steps involved in developing valid and reliable performance tasks and scoring rubrics to assess language and content. As performance assessments continue to evolve in the twenty-first century with its interest in learner-centered pedagogy, world language teachers will come to rely more on this type of assessment as part of their evaluation of student achievement. To increase students' involvement in their own learning by choosing appropriate methods and evaluation techniques, teachers not only need to become accustomed to performance assessments, but they also need to help students understand how they will benefit from these assessments and how they can use them effectively in their learning process (Tedick, 2002).

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### **Suggested Readings**

- ACTFL Performance Guidelines for K-12 Learners*. (1999). Yonkers, NY: American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages.
- National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project (NSFLEP). (1999). *Standards for foreign language learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century*. Lawrence, KS: Allen Press.







