



# Languages and Language Learners

**DIMENSION 2005**

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## Review and Acceptance Procedures

### SCOLT *Dimension*

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

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make one of four recommendations: publish as is, publish with minor revisions, publish with significant rewriting, or do not publish.

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

### 2005 SCOLT Editorial Board

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## Introduction

In 1964 a group of dedicated educators met to initiate planning for a conference of second language (L2) educators in the South and Southeast, but it was not until 1965 that the first such event became a reality. The joint conference of the Southern Conference on Language Teaching (SCOLT) and the Foreign Language Association of North Carolina (FLANC), held in Charlotte, February 24-26, 2005, marks the 40th anniversary of that initial gathering. The year 2005 is especially significant for another reason as well. The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) and its affiliate organizations have succeeded in having 2005 declared the national Year of Languages, a milestone currently being addressed by media campaigns, conferences, publications, and school and college programs. In recognition of these two milestones—the Year of Languages and our own 40th anniversary, the SCOLT Board of Directors chose as its conference theme “Many Languages, Many Learners, One World.”

It is the hope of the SCOLT Board and the editors that the articles and special annotated bibliography in the present volume will represent to some degree the diverse interests of L2 educators at all levels: those whose vocation is to provide for children an initial contact with another language, the middle- or secondary-school teachers whose charge is to make language learning both meaningful and exciting for media-savvy adolescents, the post-secondary instructors eager to offer university students connections to other disciplines and opportunities to use world languages throughout their careers, and the teacher educators specifically interested in addressing the needs of the next generation of L2 professionals.

Attempting to convince those engaged in teaching L2s of the benefits of early language instruction is little more than “preaching to the choir,” for even members of the public who are at times skeptical of the efficacy of L2 instruction in the upper grades or at the post-secondary level can be quickly won over by the contagious enthusiasm children show for L2 learning and are amazed at the apparent speed with which young learners appear to replicate phonemes, tones, and intonation patterns that often present a seemingly insurmountable challenge for adolescent and adult learners. In “Effects of FLEX Programs on Elementary Students’ Attitudes Towards Foreign Languages and Cultures,” Krista Chambless summarizes her research on the impact of the Small World Program, a foreign language exploratory (FLEX) program, on young language learners. She examines the attitudes of participants in the program towards the cultures and languages they have studied, assesses their interest in pursuing additional L2 study, and compares their attitudes with those of peers who did not participate in the program. Although some of Chambless’s findings are perhaps predictable, others will surprise many readers.

What must be learned about L2 pronunciation is ostensibly finite, and the core grammar of most languages may be introduced to students over a relatively brief period of time in secondary-school and college programs. Apart from dialectal

variations and gradual sound changes over several decades or even centuries, pronunciation remains fairly stable for most languages, and grammar too is a relatively constant phenomenon, its norms often changing only when what becomes commonplace in one or more registers of speech is deemed acceptable to the arbiters of taste for a specific language or becomes so well entrenched that alternative structures sound pedantic or eventually become obsolete. On the other hand, the lexicon of any language may change precipitously or expand freely for a number of reasons: the ability of native speakers to utilize the innate flexibility of languages that offer countless word-building possibilities to create a seemingly infinite list of words and expressions, and the constant influence upon most languages by those of neighboring countries or those exerting an impact on their technology, business, leisure time, or political life. In "Developing Vocabulary Beyond the Word," Marian Brodman reviews the role of vocabulary acquisition in several methodologies and pedagogical approaches and summarizes some of the most recent research concerning the ways learners most effectively learn vocabulary and idiomatic structures. She provides detailed definitions and examples of various collocations and lexical phrases and shares several classroom activities that may allow students to master L2 vocabulary and idiomatic structures accurately and more swiftly. Brodman concludes with a list of practical suggestions for teachers eager to facilitate the task of vocabulary acquisition for their students.

Post-secondary L2 educators frequently find themselves perplexed by the daunting chore of defining their specific expectations for the reading development of students at diverse levels. Robert Terry confronts the problem directly in "The Reading Process: Realistic Expectations for Reading in Lower-Level Language Courses." Drawing upon existing research on the reading process and the reading proficiency levels established by ACTFL, the author discusses the need for L2 educators to make appropriate choices of text type, source, and intended audience. Advocating a rational, sequential approach to helping students develop their L2 reading skills, Terry outlines as well the ways in which once the assignment is made, it should be presented in order to have students experience a sense of accomplishment upon having read something worthwhile.

Because writing is for most native speakers of a given language a skill developed only after one has achieved some degree of success in listening, speaking, and reading, it has often been treated by L2 professionals as the most difficult skill for students to master. As Carmen Schlig notes in her article, "Improving Foreign Language Writing Competence," one of the challenges facing researchers and teachers alike has been that of determining the degree to which the development of L2 writing ability should or should not parallel that of one's writing ability in the native language. After providing a summary of what we now know about process writing and detailed background on error correction, Schlig describes her research project on the development of the writing skills of college students in their fifth semester of Spanish. Her primary research questions center on (a) the effect of the varying modalities of error correction on the self-editing capability of the participants and (b) the impact of the students' awareness of the reading and writing processes on the overall quality of their writing. In the course of her discussion,

Schlig raises a few questions that challenge conventional assumptions as to how the writing skill can be developed most effectively.

David Alley offers a novel approach to L2 instruction in “Using Computer Translation Websites to Further the Objectives of the *Foreign Language Standards*.” The author briefly surveys the development of computer translation technology, including the often naive and, in the view of many L2 professionals, irksome assumptions of the lay public as to the extent to which computers can translate effectively. Alley then suggests three classroom activities that provide for teachers a means to let students explore computer translation mechanisms both to comprehend the limitations of such technology and to identify through a reverse translation process features of their own L2 composition efforts that may be questionable.

In “Rebuilding a Dying Foreign Language Education Program,” Karen Verkler first provides background concerning the precarious situation in which one university found its foreign language education program several years ago, then offers an account of her role in attempting to rebuild it. As a result of an analysis of the significant changes in external teacher certification requirements, a revision of course offerings and clinical experiences, modifications in advising procedures for L2 teacher candidates, and improvements in publicity for the teacher education program in foreign languages, it has been successfully rebuilt and currently envisions a brighter future.

Graduate Teaching assistants (GTAs) in large universities frequently see themselves as being trapped between their primary concern, that of earning an advanced degree in a specialized field, and their secondary role, service as an instructor for undergraduates, an obligation that ensures their financial ability to continue graduate study at the institution. All too often GTAs find themselves thrust into a teaching situation after little, if any seminar work or formal preparation for the assignment. There are, of course, alternatives to such slipshod treatment of both TAs and their undergraduate students, as Darrell Dernoshok and Lara Ducate remind readers in “Graduate Teaching Assistant Training: Pathways to Success.” Not content to offer what might on its own merits be viewed as a strong program to prepare TAs to enter the L2 class, Dernoshok and Ducate chose to go one step further. By supplementing the conventional content and approaches one would expect to find in a methodology course and GTA orientation program in a strong L2 program with a variety of peer observations, reflections, and electronic discussions of skills and approaches to teaching, the authors found ways to enrich their programs, in large part through the opportunities they provided for the GTAs in their separate methods classes in Spanish and German to observe one another and interact on a regular basis.

In the last volume of *Dimension* we informed readers that this year we would provide an annotated assessment bibliography, and we are pleased to fulfill that promise with “Assessment and Assessment Design 1994-2004: An Annotated Bibliography.” Drawing upon their personal experiences and information they have encountered through their own reading and the suggestions of others, Carol Wilkerson, assisted by Sue Barry, Gladys Lipton, Carol Semonsky, and Sheri Spaine Long, presents a list of what the collaborators consider to have been some of the

most useful assessment articles over the past 10 years. The contributors stress that the bibliography here present is neither intended to be extensive and all-inclusive, nor is it meant to be treated as a list of “the most important” assessment articles from the past 10 years. It is rather to be viewed as a collection of recommendations by a small group of L2 professionals who have found the items to be valuable and often indispensable to them and that they hope will be of equal benefit to others.

The editors of *Dimension 2005* and the SCOLT Board naturally hope that readers of this volume will be inspired not only to read all seven articles but also to go a step further and locate items of interest in the assessment bibliography, giving them the depth of attention they merit. Those who take but a few minutes to read the abstracts will doubtlessly note several articles that appeal to them, either because the contribution has a direct connection to their particular role as language teachers or because it is innately interesting.

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## Acknowledgments

Eight authors dedicated themselves to the research and composition of the seven articles selected for publication in this volume of *Dimension*, and the production of the annotated assessment bibliography results from the special contributions of an additional five educators. We are particularly grateful to these scholars, who reside in eight states, are involved in teaching several different languages, and represent a wide variety of teaching levels and areas of supervision. All authors met their prescribed manuscript deadlines; however, the editors are particularly appreciative of the fact that each of them was also gracious in responding to a number of last-minute inquiries, some concerning reference sources, page numbers, or verifications of Web sites, and others dealing with ambiguous wording or data.

Like the authors themselves, the members of our Editorial Board likewise represent considerable variety in curricular interests, geographical background and levels of instruction. These 13 reviewers, who hail from 12 different states, took considerable time to read the manuscripts submitted and to respond in a timely fashion with both general assessments of the contributions and specific recommendations for deletions, additions, and revisions. Because these professionals are often well informed concerning research in specific areas, their work is particularly helpful to the authors and editors, for it often allows the contributors to reconsider what they have prepared in their initial version of an article in light of information brought to their attention by one of these critical readers. Only rarely are the reviewers of an article in complete agreement as to the merits of a particular submission or lack thereof, yet each of them brings discrete knowledge of content or a special insight that will generally make it far less difficult for the editors to determine which articles appear to be particularly appropriate for our publication.

For many years the Administration of Valdosta State University has provided the Southern Conference on Language Teaching with the facilities and support services essential to the success of a publishing venture of this type, and on behalf of the SCOLT Board of Directors and other second language professionals, we again express our sincere appreciation for that contribution to our work.

Lee Bradley and  
C. Maurice Cherry, Editors



# 1

## Effects of FLEX Programs on Elementary Students' Attitudes Towards Foreign Languages and Cultures

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### Abstract

*A recent study was conducted to investigate the effectiveness of early foreign language programs on elementary school children's attitudes and motivation to learn a foreign language. Specifically, the researcher investigated the impact of a 3-week foreign language exploratory (FLEX) program, the Small World Program, on students' attitudes toward the languages and cultures that had been studied, as well as those that had not been studied. The researcher further assessed the impact of the FLEX program on the individual students' desire to engage in further foreign language learning. Finally, the study compared attitudes of the FLEX program participants with those of the students who had no exposure to foreign languages. The study found that all children had positive attitudes toward other languages and cultures. However, FLEX participants were more culturally aware, had a better understanding of the concepts of country and foreignness, and were more aware of foreign people in their community than non-FLEX students.*

### Overview

Schools in the United States today are more diverse than ever. The ever-changing dynamic environment within our schools poses many challenges to educators whose task is to prepare students to participate in and contribute to this pluralistic society. In order for students to be prepared for participation in our rapidly changing society, they need not only linguistic skills, but also positive attitudes toward and understanding of diverse cultures. Today's students need to develop a broad understanding of the world and its cultures, as well as proficiency in another language. These are the goals of foreign language classes and are interrelated because proficiency in a foreign language has been linked to positive attitudes toward the target language and culture (Gardner, 1981; Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Titone, 1990). Thus, in order to produce proficient speakers of other languages, educators must promote positive attitudes about foreign languages and cultures.

Much of the research on foreign language instruction for children was conducted prior to 1980. However, renewed interest in this field began to emerge in the early 1990s. Among the reasons for this resurgence are the diversity of American culture, the increased interest in higher standards in all curricular areas, and new brain research on how language is learned. As is evidenced by the vast amount of recent research, the diversity of American culture, and the executive call for increased mutual understanding of other cultures, interest in foreign language learning has increased (White House, 2000). In particular, the effects of early foreign language instruction on the development of cross-cultural attitudes have increased.

Debate now centers on the kinds of attitudes that should be promoted. Should public education teach tolerance and acceptance of other cultures? What happens if a culture's values cause a crisis of conscience for the student? Should public education help students develop a critical and analytical understanding of other cultures (Byram & Doyé, 1999)? These questions will most likely be debated for years to come, and their answers may differ according to each individual's own personal beliefs or differing policy goals. Nonetheless, many educators agree that one goal of education should be to increase the knowledge of and interest in other cultures, as well as one's own. One issue that needs to be explored is whether early foreign language and culture instruction can achieve this goal. The issue of whether foreign language skills are needed has been, by and large, positively resolved (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 1996; White House, 2000). The focus now is on when and how these skills and attitudes should be developed.

### **A Review of the Literature**

The research to date has yet to determine empirically the effectiveness of early foreign language programs on students' cultural attitudes and motivation to continue foreign language learning. A review of the literature found that often the terms *motivation* and *attitude* of the learner are not clearly defined. In fact, they are so intertwined that much of the research discusses the two concepts together. Crookes and Schmidt (1991) argue that most work on motivation in second language learning has been limited because it fails to distinguish between the concepts of attitude and motivation. According to Titone (1990), the development of positive attitudes is the first step toward achieving bilingualism.

Gardner and Lambert (1972) conducted a groundbreaking study in foreign language learning in which they concluded that motivation and attitude of the learner are two of the most powerful predicting factors for success. One widely accepted definition of motivation is "the process whereby goal-directed activity is instigated and sustained" (Pintrich & Schunk, 1996, p. 21). Attitude is described as "an organized and consistent manner of thinking, feeling, and reacting to people, groups, social issues or, more generally, to any event in the environment" (Lambert & Lambert, 1973, p. 72).

Attitudes develop in the course of perceiving, coping with, and adjusting to our environment. Titone (1990) found that "attitude appears to be strictly tied up

with motivational dynamics and it tends to influence most decisively the assimilation ... of both language patterns and cultural modalities” (p. 3). Some studies have focused on only one or a few variables, but for the most part the research has been focused on the relationship between attitude/motivation and language achievement.

Several studies conducted on children's attitudes have found that children as young as 4 years of age are aware of race, and racial attitudes are already present (Goodman, 1952; Seng, 1994). Between the ages of 4 and 8, children become aware of racial and ethnic differences and accept or reject people based on ethnic background (Proshansky, 1966). By age 10, children tend to view other cultures as different from their own (Lambert & Klineberg, 1967). Research indicates that students who are exposed to foreign languages at an early age have more positive attitudes about learning another language (Donato & Antonek, 1994; Donato, Antonek, & Tucker, 1996; Durette, 1972). Lee (1988) recommends early language learning and states that it helps to defeat the type of attitude that one's own culture is the only valid one.

While most researchers agree that teaching culture is more than teaching just facts (Curtain & Pesola, 1994; Jernigan & Moore, 1997; Seelye, 1997), the debate over what cultural attitudes should be discussed in class is ongoing. Crawford-Lange and Lange (1987) view culture as a process, an act of becoming a part of the target language community, and Mantle-Bromely (1992) calls this process “acculturation.” Mantle-Bromely and Miller (1991) found that students' attitudes can be changed by including lessons that prepare them to learn about language and culture. Likewise, Ingram and O'Neill (1999) assert that appropriate cultural activities are not contrary to those used to develop proficiency but rather are identical to them.

Although some studies have shown that outside factors exert more influence than do language classes (Byram & Estate-Sarries, 1991; Mantle-Bromely & Miller, 1991), others have shown that language classes in which the target culture is specifically taught produce students with more positive attitudes. Izzo (1981) found that attitude and the accompanying motivation are learned behavior and consequently can be changed.

### **Difficulty of Attitude Assessment**

Several problems associated with the scientific study of attitudes and their role in foreign language learning make the existing research on attitude change related to foreign language learning inconclusive. The conceptual and empirical difficulties involved in accurately measuring affective strength of attitude and other background variables are inherent problems (Prokop, 1979). However, Donato, Tucker, Wudthayagorn, and Igarashi (2000) conducted a study in which fourth- and fifth-graders were given a self-evaluation checklist to complete on their linguistic progress in Japanese, and the researchers concluded that “elementary school children are capable of accurate self-assessments that can be validated by independent measures of ability during an oral interview” (p. 384). While studies

have endeavored to determine the attitudes of secondary school students toward other cultures and toward foreign language learning (Byram, 1990; Hall & Ramirez, 1993; Ingram & O'Neill, 1999; Lambert & Klineberg, 1967), very few studies have assessed the attitudes of students at the elementary school level (Chambless, 2003; Davis-Wiley, 1994; Pagcaliwagan, 1997). The debate over assessing children's attitudes continues and is often not dealt with because of these problems.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of early foreign language programs on elementary school children's cultural attitudes and motivation to learn a foreign language. In particular, the researcher investigated the impact of a 3-week FLEX program, the Small World Program, on students' attitudes toward the languages and cultures that had been studied, as well as those that had not been. The researcher further assessed the impact of the FLEX program on the individual student's desire to engage in further foreign language learning. Finally, the study compared attitudes of the FLEX program participants with those of students who had no exposure to foreign languages.

### **The Small World Program**

The Small World Program is an elementary, school-based foreign language exploratory program developed in 1992 in conjunction with the Institute for Language and Culture, a private organization located on the campus of the University of Montevallo. A primary goal of the Small World Program is to promote positive attitudes among the students toward other cultures and toward language learning in general. The Small World Program was used to study the cultural attitudes and motivation for foreign language learning of elementary school students.

The Small World Program was chosen for this study because of its varied and innovative approach to foreign language learning. According to the program designers, the Small World Program is developmentally appropriate for early childhood students (Institute of Language and Culture, 1998). It uses native speakers along with the regular classroom teacher and endeavors to introduce foreign language and culture in a "non-threatening, nurturing atmosphere within a multi-sensory environment" (Blackmon & Pagcaliwagan, 1997, p. 14). The program is designed to foster the development of global perspectives in a short period of time (3 weeks).

A previous study examined the effectiveness of the Small World Program in "raising student awareness of other cultures and developing a readiness for and interest in studying foreign languages" (Pagcaliwagan, 1997, p. 5). However, Pagcaliwagan focused on parents' and teachers' perceptions of student attitudes. She found that the majority of the parents observed in their child an interest in learning a foreign language, and "most parents felt that the program was essential in fostering global awareness" (p. 54). One primary recommendation from Pagcaliwagan's study is to directly investigate student attitudes and motivation with respect to language and culture study. Specifically, the study suggests that a

pretest/posttest study of the Small World Program “might yield clearer evidence of attitude change” (p. 91). The current study addressed these recommendations by directly using data from students rather than parents' and teachers' perceptions.

### **Sample Population**

This study used two different samples. The first consisted of students participating in the Small World Language Program, and the second of students who did not participate in the Small World program and who had not had any substantial or formal foreign language instruction. This second sample acted as a comparison group in order to compare the cultural attitudes and motivation of students who did participate in the program with those who did not. Four elementary schools participated in the Small World Language Program, and all had the program from kindergarten through fifth grade. Each grade studied a different language: in kindergarten, the children learned Chinese; in first grade, they learned Russian; in second grade, they learned Japanese; in third grade, they learned French; in fourth grade, they learned German; and in fifth grade, they learned Spanish.

The Small World group consisted of 149 second grade students. There were 145 Caucasian students, 2 Hispanic students, and 2 Asian students. There were no African-American students. The comparison sample, known as the control group, was chosen for its similarity to the Small World group. The second grade at this elementary school was comprised of 36 Caucasian students, 10 African-American students, and 3 Hispanic students. There were no Asian, Indian, or Native-American students. Students at this elementary school had not participated in the Small World Program, nor had they had any substantial experience with or formal instruction in foreign language learning.

### **Method**

The difficulty of assessing attitudes, especially those of young children (Donato et al., 1996; Donato et al., 2000), required the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative method used was a questionnaire entitled *Attitudes of Elementary School Students Toward Foreign Languages and Cultures*. The instrument used in this study was developed by the researcher, in close consultation with an expert in the field of educational research. The questionnaire was divided into four sections. Section I consisted of 12 questions and was designed to assess student attitudes about foreign languages and cultures in general. The second and third sections were designed to assess student attitudes toward specific cultures that the students had previously studied (Russian and Chinese, respectively). Section IV was divided into two parts. The first part of Section IV was a pretest designed to measure student attitudes toward the Japanese language and culture prior to their study of Japanese; the second part was a posttest designed to measure student attitudes toward the Japanese language and culture after they completed their study of Japanese. The first three sections of the questionnaire were given to second graders in the participating elementary schools over a 3-week period (one section per week). The pretest of section four was given prior to

the beginning of the Small World Japanese program. The posttest was given the week following the completion of the Japanese program. To ensure comprehension of the questionnaire, the teachers read the statements aloud to the class.

The qualitative method used was that of focus groups. The focus group method used an interview with a small group of four to six students in which the interviewer probed for more detailed information about a topic. An interview guide was used by the researcher in the focus groups. Eight focus group interviews were conducted. Six of the group interviews were with students from the Small World group, while the other two group interviews were with students from the control group. Although focus groups usually consist of at least four subjects, the researcher decided to interview only two students at a time, so that the students would feel more comfortable speaking. At the same time, however, the students served as a check for each other by preventing the tendency of children to exaggerate or even lie about their knowledge or skill in a particular area. The timing of the focus group interview was chosen so that all information concerning the program would be fresh and more readily recalled by the students. This timing was expected to provide more reliable data. The focus groups for the comparison school took place at approximately the same time so that the subjects would be at the same point in their school year.

A comprehensive statistical analysis of the *Attitudes of Elementary School Students Toward Foreign Languages and Cultures* questionnaire was run using Statistical Procedures for the Social Sciences (SPSS). These included a dependent *t*-test, an analysis-of-variance (ANOVA), and a Pearson Correlation Coefficient method. Focus group interviews were also used. The interviews were transcribed, and content analysis procedures were used to determine recurring themes. Constant comparative analysis was used to categorize the data and identify important themes. The method of constant comparative analysis resulted in a set of well-defined categories, and the raw database was categorized according to differing cultural attitudes to allow interpretation and data analysis to be performed.

## **Findings and Discussion**

The results of this study are divided into two categories: cultural attitudes and desire to continue learning foreign language. Six significant findings about elementary school students' cultural attitudes are presented. These are then followed by three significant findings about elementary students' desire to learn a foreign language.

### *Cultural Attitudes*

The first finding of this study was that there were no significant attitude changes in students' cultural attitudes after participation in the Japanese portion of the Small World Program. Students' attitudes toward the Japanese language and culture were high both before and after the Small World Program. This finding thus indicates that the Small World Program did not positively or negatively impact elementary school students' attitudes toward foreign languages and cultures. This



finding is inconsistent with Pagcaliwagan's (1997) research. She found that the Small World Program positively impacted students' attitudes toward foreign cultures and increased their interest in interacting with foreign people in the community. However, her data were based on parent and teacher observation of the children during the Small World Program; no students participated in her study.

One possible reason that the present study found no changes in student attitudes before and after the program is that these students had already experienced the Small World Program in kindergarten and first grade. Therefore, as pretest data revealed, their attitudes were already positive because they knew what to expect from the program. Also, because of previous language and culture study in the Small World Program in previous grades, the students already had a positive attitude that was difficult to improve.

The second finding concerns the ANOVA test between the Chinese, Russian, and post-Japanese sections of the questionnaire. The ANOVA showed no significant attitudinal difference between the languages themselves and the students who studied those languages. However, there was a significant difference in attitudes between Russian and Japanese. The data showed that while Small World students had a positive attitude toward both Japanese and Russian, their attitude was significantly more positive toward the Japanese language and culture than toward the Russian language and culture. This finding is consistent with Pagcaliwagan's (1997) study, in which she found more unfavorable responses regarding the Russian program. After investigation, Pagcaliwagan concluded that cultural conflicts between the classroom teacher and the native speaker resulted in poor teacher attitudes. This finding is consistent with Mantle-Bromely's (1992) research, in which she found that poor teacher attitudes toward a target culture can heavily influence the formation of student attitudes. Possibly the students in Pagcaliwagan's study recognized the conflict between the regular classroom teacher and the Russian teacher, and it influenced student attitudes toward Russian.

The Small World Program designers addressed these issues after the Pagcaliwagan (1997) study. However, this study again showed the least positive attitude was toward the Russian program. Perhaps its placement between the Chinese and Japanese programs also contributed to the less positive attitude toward the Russian language and culture. Students experienced Chinese first and remembered it because it was their first experience with a foreign language. Japanese was also well remembered because it was the language most recently studied. Because Russian was in the middle, it may have had much less impact on the students' memories and therefore may have been more difficult to remember. Regardless of this significant difference, it is noteworthy that the students' attitudes toward Russian were still positive, just not as positive as toward the other two languages.

The third finding deals with attitudinal differences toward cultures that have not yet been studied. A dependent t-test was run between section 1 (general language and culture) and section 4b (post-Japanese) of the questionnaire. The scores for section 1 of the questionnaire were significantly higher than scores for section

4b. These results indicate that students have more positive attitudes towards cultures they have not studied than toward cultures they have studied (Chinese, Russian, and Japanese).

This finding does not support Riestra and Johnson's (1964) results. They found that students studying Spanish acquired more positive attitudes toward the target culture than did students not taking Spanish. Although the Spanish students exhibited more positive attitudes toward Spanish-speaking cultures, they did not "exhibit behavior that could be interpreted to mean that they had generalized their attitudes regarding foreign speaking peoples" (p. 68). In fact, they actually had a tendency to be less receptive to other foreigners than the group that received no cultural instruction.

One possible reason for this disparity between the current research and the Riestra and Johnson study is teaching methodologies. Studies by Hall and Ramirez (1993) and Tuttle, Guitant, Papila, and Zampogna (1979) indicate that presentations that stress similarities between cultures could have a positive impact on attitudes. The Small World program does not stress either cultural similarities or differences; rather comparisons occur through the authentic cultural experiences the program provides.

The fourth finding revealed in the qualitative data is that Small World Program students tended to focus on cultural differences. The Small World students discussed many more cultural differences between Japan and the United States than similarities. When asked what they had learned in the Small World Program, many responded that "Japanese people are really different." One student in particular thinks that Japanese people are strange because their beds are not like ours. While he demonstrates an understanding of the cultural difference, he does not yet accept it as valid. This current finding is consistent with Lee's (1988) research, which found that students commonly think their language and culture are the only valid ones.

This finding, however, is in conflict with that of Clavijo (1984), who found that students who received culture instruction perceived more cultural similarities than students who received no culture instruction. Again, teaching methodologies could play a role. Small World culture lessons are presented in cross-cultural contexts. Comparisons between the target culture and the native culture are not explicitly taught. Thus, in the absence of noting similarities, the differences were more easily noticed.

Finding five shows that there is no significant difference in students' cultural attitudes between Small World and control group participants. Both the qualitative and the quantitative data sets show that students in the Small World and the control group have positive attitudes toward foreign languages and foreign cultures. However, the qualitative data reveal a difference in the cultural awareness of Small World participants and control group participants. Small World group participants seem to be more aware of the different peoples and cultures they encounter than do control group participants. This finding is in agreement with that of Pagcaliwagan (1997), who found that Small World students did demonstrate an interest in and an awareness of other cultures in their community. Again,

however, Pagcaliwagan's study relied on anecdotal data reported by parents and teachers rather than direct evaluation of the students.

The sixth finding revealed an important difference in the Small World participants' multicultural awareness as compared to that of the control group. Although the quantitative data found no significant attitudinal differences, a detailed examination of the qualitative data did reveal a difference. These qualitative data showed that Small World students seemed to have a better understanding of "foreignness." They were better able to understand the concept of country and identify foreign people and languages in their community. They were better able to discuss similarities and differences among the cultures. The qualitative data also showed that Small World students seemed to demonstrate a greater understanding of cultural differences than the control group. Mantle-Bromely (1995) suggests that children make choices about attitudes towards other cultures through their personal experiences with that culture. The Small World Program is designed to provide students with a personal experience of the target culture. Thus, the Small World students are better able to make choices about their own attitudes towards other languages and cultures.

#### *Desire to Continue Foreign Language Learning*

The first finding, with regard to desire to learn a foreign language, shows a correlation between attitudes toward the target culture and student desire to continue foreign language learning. The quantitative data show that the more positive the attitude toward the target culture, the stronger the desire to continue learning the target language. The current data show that the strongest correlation was with the Chinese language; that is, the stronger or more positive a student's attitudes toward the Chinese culture, the greater that student's desire to continue studying the Chinese language at some point in the future. As for the Russian and Japanese culture and languages, respectively, there was a moderate correlation between student attitudes toward the culture and their desire to continue foreign language learning. Regardless of the variation of the strengths of the correlations across the three cultures and languages examined, they all show that there is a moderate to strong relationship between a student's attitude toward a culture and his or her desire to continue studying the language of that culture.

Noteworthy is the finding that the strength of the correlations was in the same order in which the students studied the languages: Chinese (kindergarten), Russian (first grade), then Japanese (second grade). One possible explanation for this phenomenon is that the strongest correlation, Chinese, was the first language studied. As is commonly stated, first impressions are often the strongest and longest lasting, and, therefore, subsequent experiences with foreign cultures or languages simply may not have as strong an impact. Thus, the correlation between attitude toward culture and desire to continue to study the language was not as strong when the Russian and Japanese cultures were later studied. Another possible explanation for this phenomenon could be related to child development. When the students studied Chinese, they were very young (of kindergarten age) and perhaps

equated language and culture as one; then, as they grew older, they began to distinguish between language and culture with an increased understanding of language. Thus, in kindergarten, a positive attitude toward the culture may have equaled a strong affinity for the language and a strong desire to continue learning it; however, by the second grade, even if the students felt that the Japanese culture was interesting, they may have realized that Japanese was a more difficult language to learn. Therefore, by second grade a positive attitude toward a culture may not be as great an influence on the desire to continue learning the language of that culture because of the perceived difficulty of the language.

The second finding in this study indicates that with respect to learning foreign languages, both the Small World and control group students have a positive attitude. This finding was revealed through analysis of the qualitative data. While beliefs about language learning difficulty were mixed, the question of language difficulty did not seem to play a role in whether students wanted to learn a foreign language. Whether students thought that learning a language would be hard or easy did not seem to affect their desire to learn another one.

The third finding related to learning foreign languages, as revealed by the current qualitative data, concerns parental or peer influence. The current data show that the most important contributing factor to whether or not a student wanted to learn another language was parental or peer influence. Students in both the Small World and the control groups most often stated that they wanted to learn another language because they knew someone who spoke that language (e.g., father, uncle, friend, babysitter). The proficiency level of the friend or family member did not seem to be important. Even if the person knew only a few words in another language, the student still wanted to learn that language. This finding is consistent with that of previous research, which reveals that students' attitudes reflect those of their parents (Feenstra, 1969; Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Lambert & Klineberg, 1967).

As was found in previous research studies, the current study also shows that outside factors, such as school, peers, society at large, gender, and socioeconomic status, can influence student attitudes more significantly than contact with the target language community (Byram & Estate-Sarries, 1991; Mantle-Bromely & Miller, 1991). Both groups, whether they have had contact with the target language or not, want to learn another language because they know someone who speaks that language.

## **Conclusion**

The present study evaluated a 3-week foreign language exploratory (FLEX) program, the Small World Program, to determine its effect on elementary school students' attitudes toward foreign languages and cultures. The study found that, although attitudes before and after the program did not significantly change, attitudes were very positive before the program and remained high afterwards. Both Small World and control group participants had positive attitudes toward foreign languages and foreign cultures, and both groups wanted to learn foreign languages.

The study revealed, nevertheless, that the Small World group was more culturally aware; that is, Small World Program students were more aware of foreign cultures and languages in their community. Surprisingly, the study also found that, while the Small World Group had a positive attitude in general toward foreign cultures and languages after participation in the program, the group members had less positive attitudes toward the specific cultures and languages they studied.

Therefore, based on previous research and the results of this current study, foreign language exploratory programs have much to contribute toward the development of positive attitudes and awareness of elementary school students toward other cultures and languages; more programs such as these should be developed and implemented. However, the Small World Program and other future FLEX programs should be carefully designed to emphasize cultural similarities in order to have the greatest possible positive impact. More research is needed in this area to determine the types of programs that will best prepare our children for a successful future in a global society.

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# 2

## Developing Vocabulary Beyond the Word

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### **Abstract**

*Research in second language acquisition has generated new knowledge about the operations of the brain and the way it facilitates the learning of vocabulary. In addition, the field of corpus linguistics has brought us new information about words and the ways in which they are used in texts—their frequency, the words often occurring with them in the same text, and their syntactical features. The article will discuss the implications of this language acquisition research for second language teachers as they assist their students in developing knowledge of the lexis. Going beyond the word to prefabricated phrases and word associations can lead students to an enriched vocabulary and a greater fluency. Illustrations are in French, but this discussion is pertinent to all language teachers.*

### **Background**

Dating back several centuries, the grammar translation method of language teaching, which concentrated on the reading of classical texts, spawned the bilingual vocabulary lists that figure today in most language textbooks. A literary vocabulary was presented for the main purpose of illustrating points of grammar (Rivers, 1981). At the end of the 19th century, the Direct Method was developed in the United States by Sauveur (1874) and made famous by the Berlitz Schools. It focused on the oral aspects of language and gave listening comprehension a greater role. Translation was eliminated and explicit grammar teaching was minimized. The Direct Method employed a concrete, simple vocabulary, often accompanied by visuals that had a strong connection to the real world.

After World War II, audiolingualism, borrowing from the Direct Method its emphasis on speaking and listening, stressed pronunciation, oral drilling, sentence patterns, and memorization. Vocabulary was kept simple, so as not to distract from the structures being emphasized in the drills. No clear method for developing vocabulary was outlined (Coady, 1993). In the 1950s, Noam Chomsky rejected the behaviorist approach of audiolingualism and posited that innate rules govern language (1957). Reacting to Chomsky's notion of an autonomous linguistic competence, Hymes (1972) stressed the sociolinguistic and pragmatic factors of language in the communicative approach of the 1970s. This approach, which still has a great impact on today's second language classroom, centered on the message

and fluency rather than on grammatical accuracy. Vocabulary still did not play a central role in language learning, but rather supported the functional/notional concepts and tasks and the discourse-level features of language (Zimmerman, 1997).

The proponents of the Natural Approach in the early 1980s placed great emphasis on comprehensible and meaningful input. Vocabulary was viewed as being important to language acquisition, since “acquisition will not take place without comprehension of vocabulary” (Krashen & Terrell, 1983, p. 155). Yet students’ attention was not focused on vocabulary learning per se but on communication, the goal of an activity. Krashen (1989) suggested that beyond the beginning levels, new vocabulary was best acquired through reading.

Thus, from the analysis of language in the grammar-translation method to the language use of the communicative approach, vocabulary learning has been considered mostly incidental and implicit. While not taking the foreground in any one approach, it has been generally left to learners to handle in their own fashion.

### **Knowing a Word**

Since the early 1990s, however, there has been an increased interest and focus on vocabulary instruction. Second language acquisition experts have encouraged a greater emphasis on vocabulary than has been seen in the traditional curriculum. Some have called for a lexical syllabus in which vocabulary assumes a more predominant role and requires a more systematic presentation (Sinclair & Renouf, 1988). Lewis (1993) has advocated a lexical approach in which more vocabulary is taught and is expanded by calling attention to the various meanings a word may have, its collocations (the words that frequently occur with it), and its metaphorical usage (p. 33). The basis for his approach is that, since vocabulary carries more meaning than grammar, it would be better to teach a “grammaticalized lexis” than a “lexicalized grammar” (p. 34). Whether or not one agrees that grammar should play a secondary role in language teaching, this emphasis on lexis nonetheless elicits serious reflection on traditional approaches to vocabulary instruction.

When a language teacher is asked to reflect on vocabulary presentation, what comes to mind are decontextualized, bilingual lists of second-language (L2) words with their first-language (L1) translations typically found in most textbooks. This format has prevailed because it is a quick and simple way to present a large number of words to learners. These lists are an appropriate and efficient way for beginning language learners to acquire a core vocabulary. Yet this sometimes overwhelming number of words, often placed in categories based on parts of speech (nouns, adjectives, verbs, etc.), followed by a “miscellaneous” category for idioms, multi-word expressions, prepositions, and conjunctions, can be a daunting challenge for students. Second-language textbooks still rely to a great extent upon the learners’ ability to memorize these word lists placed at the end of each chapter. Students must often find their own way of learning the lexicon and determining how to put words together to form acceptable L2 sentences. This is a valid approach in the sense that students develop their own personalized lexicon in the process. However, there is a drawback to presenting the lexis in lists with no context. McCarthy

(1990) has said, “Over-concentration on learning single words may hinder the development of the L2 phrasal lexicon and deny the opportunities this gives for rapid retrieval and fluent, connected speech in the stressful conditions of speaking and writing” (p. 45). Indeed, there is no certainty that knowing a word’s native language equivalent will lead to the appropriate retrieval of a lexical item for productive language use. Richards (1976) has suggested that what it means to know a word far surpasses knowledge of its equivalent in one’s first language. Issues of pronunciation, spelling, derivation, collocation (word partnerships), register, syntactical functions, and associations are also significant factors that must be known for full mastery of a word.

Seeing only a single-word translation can also give students the false comfort of believing that the equivalent in their native language is absolute. Yet we know that some words can have a range of meanings, such as the word “prendre” in French. Such a word will constantly present problems to students who are aware only of the single, initial meaning (‘to take’) that appears in the decontextualized word list.

False cognates, words that are similar enough in one’s native language and the target language but with different meanings, also present a problem for beginning students. For example, the word “sympathique” (‘nice’) in French suggests, but does not convey the true meaning of the English word “sympathetic.” Words such as “libraire” (‘bookstore’), and “football” (‘soccer’) are among the many that fall into the category of “faux amis” (‘false friends’) and require extended treatment.

The cultural dimension to the meaning and use of vocabulary words is also an important factor in lexical development. Rivers (1988) stresses the importance of the sociocultural meaning of words that she defines as “the evaluative dimension which French people give to words and groups of words because of their common experiences with language in their culture” (p. 181). The evocative power of the French word “pain” (‘bread’) cannot be fully understood without one’s knowing its significance in French daily life. A discussion of its place in a French meal, the central role of the bakery, the brick ovens so crucial to baking, and phrases such as “long comme un jour sans pain” (‘long as a day without bread’) is necessary for real cultural understanding. Spinelli and Siskin (1992) outline five important criteria for the selection, presentation, and practice of vocabulary in a cultural context:

1. Present and practice vocabulary within culturally authentic semantic fields and networks of relationships.
2. Present and practice vocabulary in ways that distinguish the native and the target culture.
3. Use authentic visuals where native-culture/target-culture referents differ in form.
4. Present and practice a word’s denotation and connotation.
5. Present and practice vocabulary in ways that will reinforce appropriate behavior in the target culture. (p. 313)

It is also important that students be made aware of register when speaking in formal and informal situations. A serious communication problem may result if one does not understand the connotations of using “tu” (‘you’), which is informal and used for close friends, family, and animals; and “vous” (‘you’), which is formal and reserved for strangers, persons in authority, and plural verbs. Language constraints also involve the use of polite versus more abrupt language.

Constraints on the usage of certain phrases can be demonstrated with an exercise in which students are asked to rank the degree of politeness of several utterances:

Which is the more polite?

- (a) “Monsieur, où se trouve la pharmacie, s’il vous plaît?” (‘Sir, where is the pharmacy, please?’)
- (b) “Pardon, Monsieur, pourriez-vous me dire où se trouve la pharmacie?” (‘Pardon me, sir, could you tell me where the pharmacy is?’)
- (c) “Et la pharmacie?” (‘The pharmacy?’)

### **Vocabulary Storage and Retrieval**

The ever-expanding list of vocabulary words and expressions that a student must acquire is indeed a complex process involving the sorting out of diverse items, their storage, and later retrieval. Fortunately, the brain, researchers have discovered, can assist in these complex operations. Second language acquisition studies have revealed that the brain operates as an organizer of the knowledge that it receives as input (Gairns & Redman, 1986). Grouping diverse bits of information together seems to be its way of facilitating learning. Consequently, teachers can give their students an important strategy for vocabulary learning by highlighting the importance of the brain’s organizing function. When students learn to organize the large number of new vocabulary words they are presented, there will be better retention and a greater hope of retrieval for communication. On the one hand, Henning (1973) suggests that in classifying vocabulary, elementary-level learners pay more attention to sound and spelling than to meaning. Therefore, a method such as the *keyword* technique can aid in facilitating the retrieval of new words from memory. It involves going beyond the word to an L1 or L2 word that the learner associates with the new word in question. The keyword strategy combines sounds and images so that learners can more easily remember words that they hear or read. Students are asked to identify a familiar word in their own language that sounds like the new word. Then they are asked to generate a visual image of the new word and the familiar word interacting in some way. The target language word does not have to sound exactly like the new word. The French word, “escargot” (‘snail’), for example, could be represented by a snail sitting on a moving car. Relating new knowledge (e.g., an L2 word) to information already known (an L1 word) is a strong learning strategy. Beyond the elementary level, Hulstijn (1997) states, “Intermediate or advanced students have enough L2 knowledge . . . to form associations within the L2, rather than between L2 and L1” (p. 217).

Nonetheless, advanced learners, according to Henning, appear to store vocabulary in memory mainly on the basis of meanings. A simple test demonstrates the brain's organizational ability according to sense relations. If individuals are given a list of words to study for one minute (e.g., cherry, book, ruler, banana, table, eraser, persimmon, dresser, lamp, and kumquat) and then told to cover up the list and write down as many words as they can recall, the results are fairly predictable. Most subjects will group like items together because the brain organizes in clusters of meanings and relationships (Redman & Ellis, 1996).

The presentation of semantically related words can be useful for vocabulary learning and retrieval. Teachers can lead their students to understand the ways in which words can be grouped for storage. Words are associated in different ways: (1) by *antonymy*, or relations of oppositeness: “sec – mouillé” (‘wet - dry’); (2) by *synonymy* or relations of sameness: “voiture – auto” (‘car – automobile’); (3) by *subordinative classification*: “chien – animal” (‘dog – animal’); (4) by *coordinate classification*: “pomme – banane” (‘apple – banana’); (5) by *superordinate classification*: “légumes - haricots verts” (‘vegetables - green beans’). The way in which words are related to one another semantically and how words can substitute for one another are important features of vocabulary learning (Aitchison, 1987). These sense relations should all be explored at the advanced levels by a variety of exercises. Going beyond a word to the class of words to which it belongs can enhance the learners' ability to store and later retrieve it for use in conversation. Some activities that aid in organizing words include grouping, semantic maps, and clines, which will be discussed in the following section.

### Word Associations

Schema theory tells us that knowledge is organized in *schemata* or structures and that learning is the result of either adding to or adjusting already existing knowledge (Rumelhart, 1981). This concept is important for vocabulary acquisition, for it suggests that new vocabulary words are best learned in semantically related groups that contain words that the learner already knows.

The following activities access students' prior knowledge and allow them to understand how new concepts fit into their already-existing knowledge structures. There are a number of different ways in which associative links between words are organized. Teachers can use synonym and antonym games and exercises such as matching, creating charts or boxes to show superordinates and coordinates, and combining phrases from two columns. An exercise such as the following is typical in elementary textbooks, where students are asked to find the odd item in a group of five words:

“pain”	“viande”	“légume”	“fourchette”	“fruit”
‘bread’	‘meat’	‘vegetable’	‘fork’	‘fruit’

The “correct” answer is the odd word, “fourchette,” which logically becomes the focus of student attention. In fact, a second question should always be asked in this exercise; that is, why the remaining words are linked together, for that is the more

significant issue in vocabulary storage. Students should be focusing on the words representing the edible items that have something in common and will be stored together in memory. This exercise can be used for subordinates, hyponyms, and synonyms.

Most teachers are familiar with another association activity, creating a semantic map, a diagram in which a key concept (house, baseball, or transportation, for example) is linked to related concepts by means of lines or arrows. Such a diagram shows how ideas fit together and calls attention to the relationships that words have among themselves. Semantic mapping puts a word into a context of related words or concepts. The purpose of the mapping is to create linkages between words that can theoretically be retrieved more easily in communicative situations. Nouns have traditionally been the main part of speech included in these maps. Lewis (1993), however, calls for the use of verbs as well as nouns. He states, "It is important to think about the language used to talk about a topic, not simply naming the objects associated with the topic" (p. 104).

Words can be associated by using graded steps of meaning called *clines*. Steps or shades of degree of adjectives such as those relating to temperature in French—"chaud, tiède, frais, froid, glacial" ('hot, lukewarm, cool, cold, freezing')—are important vocabulary builders in that students learn to distinguish the nuances among words that belong to the same grouping. Clines are also important for discourse level communication (Nation, 1994). Written texts often employ synonyms, antonyms, superordinates, and subordinates as cohesive devices to avoid repetition or to make references to previously stated concepts by inclusion or opposition. Natural conversation often employs these shades of meaning to modify, contradict, or affirm an interlocutor's judgment.

In an important study on discourse, McCarthy (1991) has suggested that certain functions of language, such as agreement and disagreement, are more frequently expressed in speech through lexis rather than by grammar. Sometimes, a speaker will express agreement by using a synonym: "C'est très étrange. / Oui, tout ?à fait bizarre." ('That's very strange. / Yes, totally odd.'). At other times, a speaker will use an antonym: "Jean n'est pas travailleur. / Non, il est vraiment paresseux." ('John is not hardworking. / No, he is really lazy.'). French teachers will want to call attention to the common French agreement response including both an antonym and the negation: "Il fait froid aujourd'hui. / En effet, il ne fait pas chaud." ('It's cold today. / Indeed, it is not warm.'). An interlocutor can agree by using a more general word or superordinate: "Les pommes sont mûres. / Tous les fruits sont bons." ('The apples are ripe. / All the fruit is good.'). Agreement can be made with a subordinate noun: "Les fleurs sont belles. / Surtout les tulipes." ('The flowers are beautiful. / Especially the tulips.'). These exchanges may also include fully grammaticalized utterances with the same pragmatic function, such as: "Ce qu'il dit est vrai, je crois. / Oui, je suis tout à fait d'accord." ('What he says is true, I believe. / Yes, I am in complete agreement.')

The ability to use alternative lexical items is an important factor in achieving fluency. Practicing this kind of conversational exchange with students can bring them one step closer to a more natural way of speaking than is achieved by the

following typical, and often mechanical, grammatical exercise of negating an assertion, such as: “Jean travaille beaucoup. / Jean ne travaille pas beaucoup.” (‘John works a lot. / John does not work a lot.’)

### Enrichment Activities

While elementary-level learners need not be overwhelmed by too many vocabulary words, it is certainly important that after one or two semesters teachers should also be enriching the vocabulary that students already know. Enriching activities may involve learning new information about previously met words, new associations, and placing a word in a new context. Authentic dialogues and other print materials such as newspapers, magazines, Web articles, songs, and literary excerpts, offer teachers a wide variety of resources for introducing new vocabulary and adding new contexts and meanings to words already taught. The use of culturally authentic sources can be stimulating pedagogical aids for a proficiency-oriented classroom (Omaggio, 2001). Using new vocabulary productively makes learners access relevant schemata and gives them feedback as to the appropriateness of their word choice. According to Oxford and Crookall (1990), “This feedback gradually helps to shape and reshape the learner’s existing schemata related to the new word” (p. 24).

From the start, students need to be aware that words in paired, decontextualized lists usually contain only the core meaning of a word. For some words this simplicity will suffice, since there is only one meaning; for example, “ashtray,” “thorax,” “hard-drive.” Others that are polysemic and have multiple meanings depend upon the context. A verb such as “prendre” in French has a core meaning of ‘to take.’ Novice students of French are also presented with “prendre” in the context of food and drink, where it translates into English as ‘to have.’ First-year college textbooks reflect no consensus as to what other definitions and uses should be taught at the elementary level. An analysis of five current French elementary textbooks found 3 to 17 entries for “prendre” in their glossaries. Authors clearly have individual opinions as to what constitutes important usage of this verb. If one were to peruse the *Oxford Hachette French Dictionary* (2001), one would find that the verb “prendre,” in addition to its core meaning, has no fewer than 15 different meanings, including ‘to take off,’ ‘to take up,’ ‘to take down,’ ‘to take it upon oneself,’ ‘to take for,’ ‘to pick up,’ ‘to assume,’ ‘to steal,’ ‘to bring,’ ‘to get,’ ‘to choose,’ ‘to charge,’ ‘to hire,’ ‘to catch,’ and ‘to handle.’ It is no wonder that beginning students are often stymied by phrases containing the verb “prendre” that do not make sense with the translation of ‘to take.’

Polysemic words should have an extended teaching presentation over several months or semesters. Which meanings to teach, of course, will be a matter of judgment. Teachers need to think of the expressions and uses that will most commonly arise in their programs. To help teachers decide on which meanings to present to the class, it is helpful to note that dictionaries usually prioritize meanings of a word in relation to their frequency of use. Also, books such as Baudot’s *Fréquences d’utilisation des mots en français écrit contemporain* (1992) can be an important

aid. In first-year French textbooks, verbs such as “faire” (‘to make’) and “avoir” (‘to have’) are regularly presented with their idioms. Yet textbooks can enhance verbs such as “aller,” “pouvoir,” “vouloir,” “mettre,” and “être” (‘to go,’ ‘to be able,’ ‘to wish,’ ‘to put,’ and ‘to be’) by adding to their repertory of meanings and usages. In addition to multiple meanings, these verbs can also appear in a wide variety of collocations and lexical phrases, a topic that will be explored in the following section.

### **Prefabricated Language**

The associations that the brain makes to organize the vast amount of word knowledge it receives as input are enhanced by another important discovery of language acquisition research: the brain takes in language at times in larger bits and pieces than the individual word. Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992) state:

Many theories of language performance suggest that vocabulary is stored redundantly, not only as individual morphemes, but also as parts of phrases, or even as longer memorized chunks of speech, and that it is often re-retrieved from memory in these pre-assembled chunks. (p. xvi)

Young language learners do not start from an individual word that is then combined with other words in order to make full sentences. Rather, it is only after young learners have mastered long stretches of language that they eventually break down the phrases into analyzable parts and ultimately arrive at the grammar. Researchers are finding evidence that adult learners retain large chunks of language as well (Peters, 1983). These phrases or sentences represent some of the routine and predictable speech that occurs in everyday conversations. Speakers arrive at fluency by combining these chunks.

To test the validity of these findings, French teachers have only to think of two phrases that typically appear in the first chapters of the elementary textbook: “Je m’appelle . . .” (‘My name is . . .’) and “Comment allez-vous?” (‘How are you?’). Without knowing that the first verb is a reflexive verb and the second is a question in the inverted form, students are well able to learn these phrases for immediate conversational use. Numerous phrases and sentences fall under this category of prefabricated speech. Michael Lewis (1993) has said, “Introducing the idea of chunking to students, and providing them with materials which encourage the identification of chunks should be one of the central activities of language teaching” (p. 122).

Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992) divide prefabricated phrases into *collocations* and *lexical phrases*, the former having no set pragmatic functions, and the latter having such functions (p. 37).

### **Collocations**

*Collocations* are words frequently found in the same utterance. The most important kinds of collocations include the association of an adjective with a noun:



“les cheveux châtons” (‘light brown hair’); a verb with a noun: “prendre une décision” (‘make a decision’); a noun with a verb: “le chien aboie” (‘the dog is barking’); an adverb with an adjective: “bien difficile” (‘very difficult’); and a verb with an adverb: “parlons sérieusement” (‘let’s be serious’). Students need to know which other words one can and cannot use with a particular word being studied. Knowing collocational ranges is a major factor in being able to use a word correctly. By learning collocational groups, students will have a better idea of restrictions placed on a word. In French, for example, “prendre” is employed with “décision” and not the word “faire” (‘to make’), which English speakers often erroneously translate literally from their native language.

One way in which textbooks could improve the vocabulary building of students is to provide verbs and adjectives that commonly collocate with the nouns presented as new vocabulary. This grouping would be more helpful for learners than seeing the verbs and adjectives in separate columns and being left to their own devices to determine which verb or adjective appropriately fits with each noun.

Students should have their attention brought to some collocations that are not contiguous in a sentence. A sentence such as “Quelle décision est-ce que Jean a prise?” (‘What decision did John make?’) contains the common collocation, “prendre une décision” (‘make a decision’), the elements of which are separated by other words. Teachers could develop appropriate awareness-raising activities to alert students to these types of phrases. Highlighting, underlining, or a series of arrows to connect collocational words would be useful in overhead presentations.

Words sometimes need to be distinguished by the collocations that are or are not possible with synonyms: the word “leave,” for example, has different translations in French, depending upon its collocations. When there is no object, “partir” is appropriate. When a person or a place is mentioned, “quitter” is used. When an object is left on the table, “laisser” is appropriate. “Commencer” and “démarrer” (‘to begin’), are not interchangeable verbs. “Commencer” is employed with a book, a lesson, or a reading, but “démarrer” is appropriate for use with motors, projects, or campaigns.

Antonyms do not always fit into every situation. Words may have different opposites in different contexts. In French, “fort” (‘strong’) and “faible” (‘weak’) would apply to a person, but “fort” and “doux” (‘mild’) to a cheese. An exercise that asks students to identify the pairs of adjectives in one column that can be employed with nouns in another sensitizes learners to the necessity of understanding collocational restrictions. Knowing what words “work” with other words is an important step to achieving fluency. Aitchison (1987) found collocations to be “powerful and long-lasting” because the brain stores collocations together and makes strong linkages that aid in retrieval (p. 79). Collocations build expectations and thereby provide the listener or reader with an added strategy for comprehension. The presence of one word may serve as a cue for the second. Collocations are also important because speakers are able to retrieve longer bits of speech during oral communication and writing. They offer the speaker and the writer a way of chunking ideas for more rapid production. By training students to think beyond the word to the co-text of their utterances, instructors equip students to generate natural and

probable speech patterns. Collocations are one type of prefabricated speech. They do not have particular pragmatic functions. The following section will discuss the second type of fixed routines, lexical phrases, which perform specific linguistic tasks.

### Lexical Phrases

The second type of prefabricated speech includes various kinds of lexical phrases: *polywords*, *institutionalized sentences*, *phrasal constraints*, and *sentence heads*. *Polywords* are short continuous phrases without variation that perform particular linguistic tasks. Phrases such as “Comment allez-vous?” (‘How are you?’) and “à demain” (‘until tomorrow’) are polywords that students typically learn on the first day of class. “Tant pis” (‘so much the worse’) can express indifference. “Ça alors” (‘good grief’) reveals astonishment. Polywords can express qualifications of the speaker (“et néanmoins” [‘but nevertheless’]), relate one topic to another (“à propos” [‘by the way’]), and shift topics (“Comme je le disais tout à l’heure . . .” [‘As I was saying before . . .’]). They are clearly important for cohesion and social interaction.

*Phrasal constraints* are usually short sequences with empty slots for substitutions. In French, phrases such as “à mon [ton, son, etc.] avis” (‘in my, your, his opinion’), “bon X [jour, soir]” (‘hello, good evening’), and “à bientôt” or “à demain” (‘See you soon or tomorrow’) are short phrases that students can pick up quickly. Phrasal constraints such as “Il y a [un an, deux mois, six semaines]” (‘A year, two months, six weeks ago’) can be practiced in an exercise such as the following: “Using the phrase ‘il y a’ + indication of time, tell me the last time that you (1) ate a pizza, (2) went to the movies, (3) visited Paris, (4) read a best-seller.”

Another type of prefabricated speech that conveys pragmatic meaning is the *institutionalized sentence*, consisting of continuous, sentence-length utterances. It consists of formulaic language used in social interactions. Tourist language typically contains a large number of these functional phrases. The following can all be taught as memorized chunks of language that can contribute to a student’s fluency: asking for a reserved room in a hotel: “J’ai réservé au nom de Smith.” (‘I reserved under the name of Smith.’); asking the price of an item in a store: “Combien coûte ce livre?” (‘How much does this book cost?’); and asking for a specific size of a dress or shoes: “Je chausse du 38.” (‘I wear a size 38.’).

In French, institutionalized sentences would also include phrases of introduction: “Permettez-moi de vous présenter X.” (‘Allow me to introduce X to you.’); clarification: “Qu’est-ce que vous voulez dire?” (‘What do you mean?’); agreement: “C’est évident.” (‘That’s obvious.’); refusal: “Ce n’est pas la peine.” (‘Don’t bother.’); indifference: “Cela m’est égal.” (‘It’s all the same to me.’); and surprise: “Je n’en reviens pas.” (‘I can’t get over it.’). These expressions, which can be learned before students have mastered their grammatical structures, augment a student’s communicative power and add to a more natural style of speaking.

Proverbs are institutionalized phrases that could appear more frequently in current textbooks, even at the elementary level. Many contain themes and content words that students learn as beginning language students:

- “On ne peut tout avoir.” (‘You can’t have your cake and eat it too.’)  
 “Loin des yeux, loin du coeur.” (‘Out of sight, out of mind.’)  
 “Ne réveillez pas le chat qui dort.” (‘Let sleeping dogs lie.’)  
 “Il faut de tout pour faire un monde.” (‘It takes all kinds.’)  
 “Mieux vaut tard que jamais” (‘Better late than never.’)  
 “Qui ne risque rien, n’a rien.” (‘Nothing ventured, nothing gained.’)  
 “C’est à prendre ou à laisser.” (‘Take it or leave it.’)  
 “Il boit comme un trou.” (‘He drinks like a fish.’)  
 “Travailler pour des prunes.” (‘To work for peanuts.’)  
 “Tout est bien qui finit bien.” (‘All’s well that ends well.’)

When learning proverbs, students are given ready-made speech containing accurate structures that may not be learned grammatically until a later time. Proverbs can give students a feeling of confidence by providing long stretches of language that can be used in conversational exchanges. In addition, as Richmond (1987) points out, they may also be used to note the different cultural framework through which another culture perceives the world.

It is important for students to see and hear contexts in which a key phrase can function. Dialogues would therefore be useful techniques for introducing and practicing these items. One important feature of teaching prefabricated patterns is to have the class notice the words that convey a particular function. Schmidt’s work on noticing (1990) reminds teachers that sometimes students need to have their attention drawn to certain linguistic features of sentences in order for real processing to take place. Dialogues contain grammatical structures and content words that may be new to them and therefore more salient than the institutionalized phrases that support the give and take of the conversation. It is the teacher’s role to point out the chunks of language that contribute to the spontaneous flow of a conversation. Pre-teaching the phrases and using boldface print, italics, or underlining are useful ways to bring students’ attention to these phrases. Also, questions such as the following constitute important activities during dialogue comprehension activities: What expressions are used to make a request? What expressions are used to change the topic of the conversation? What phrases indicate refusal on the part of the speaker? Focusing on the phrases that keep an interaction running smoothly and perform specific tasks is essential for the development of discourse-level speech.

*Sentence heads* or frames are lexical phrases that introduce whole sentences. They function as summarizers: “en fin de compte” (‘when all is said and done’) and “Il est évident que . . .” (‘It is evident that . . .’); markers of topics: “Commençons par dire que . . .” (‘Let us begin by saying . . .’); and requests: “Pourriez-vous . . .” (‘Could you . . .’). The sentence head “Il me semble que . . .” (‘It seems to me that . . .’) introduces the speaker’s opinion or impression. “Je suis désolé de vous interrompre” (‘I am sorry to interrupt’) is a way of excusing oneself. “Tu ne devrais pas . . .” (‘You should not . . .’) allows the speaker to make a reproach or give advice.

One useful tool for developing a repertory of sentence heads is Keller and Warner’s *Conversational Gambits* (1988). This study contains a variety of phrases for opening conversations, introducing new ideas during a conversation, adding

pieces of information to a conversation, demanding explanations, presenting arguments and counter-arguments, and showing interest. It also includes ways of incorporating these “gambits” into mini-conversations to be practiced in pairs.

An exercise teachers can employ involves completion of sentence heads. Since these phrases are used for discourse-level language, it is appropriate to use dialogues as models for this exercise. In studying travel, for example, the teacher might say, “Complete this sentence head with three phrases appropriate to travel situations.” Students could answer with any number of appropriate responses that all begin with the same sentence head: “Pardon, Monsieur, mais pourriez-vous m’indiquer la route pour Rouen?” (‘Excuse me, sir, but could you show me the way to Rouen?’) or “. . . me dire le prix de la chambre?” (‘. . . tell me the cost of the room?’). Repeated practice of the sentence head combined with acceptable completions can enhance the fluency of learners and give them added confidence in discourse-level conversations.

Lewis (1993) states, “There is a strong pedagogical case for introducing lexical phrases into the classroom and asking students to repeat them several times in a drill-activity and to use some of them in situational practices of a relatively controlled kind” (p. 127). Helping students learn long stretches of language with unfamiliar grammatical forms can be a challenge. One exercise that can enhance the storage of these lexical phrases is to divide the class into as many groups as there are syllables in the lexical phrase. Each group is assigned one syllable of the phrase and the class listens to the phrase uttered by the combination of all groups participating. Then the second group begins with the first syllable and so on until each group must repeat each assigned part of the phrase. Repetition with a new syllable during each round strengthens memory and encourages storage. It may also help in avoiding the “bathtub” effect described by Aitchison (1987, p. 119). People have a tendency to recall the beginnings and ends of words (here, lexical phrases) as if someone were in a bathtub with head and feet exposed. Since each group must perform with the middle of the phrase, repetition should reinforce accurate learning of the entire phrase. An alternative to this method is to have each group add to the preceding syllable until the entire phrase is uttered by the last group. To avoid monotony, teachers can end the exercise when they feel that students have become comfortable with the sounds and rhythm of the new phrase. This procedure can be followed by an activity in which the teacher creates a situation in which the key phrase can be employed in an appropriate context.

The various types of prefabricated speech can be daunting for learners. One way to encourage first-year students to augment their storehouse of collocations and lexical phrases is to hand out a word study sheet. On each sheet, teachers can choose one important verb or noun with blanks for students to complete. Items to be added would include the core meaning of the word, additional meanings, collocations, idioms, clichés, and other fixed phrases. Examples of each in context would be included. In this way learners get a clear sense of the ongoing process that is involved in mastering a word in a second language. Whether additions are prompted by textbook material, explicit instruction, or by the student’s individual readings and experiences with the language, maintaining these sheets in a vocabulary note-

book is a useful way to guide students to realize the importance of developing their knowledge of individual words and expressions and using these words and phrases in appropriate contexts. Lewis (1993) has said: “Institutionalized sentences provide a way of increasing the elementary student’s communicative resources rapidly, and at the same time provide accurate and natural data against which other novel utterances may be monitored and as valuable resources contributing to the acquisition of competence” (p. 95).

## Conclusion

This article has presented recent research findings of specialists concerned with vocabulary development. There are many implications of this research:

- (1) Foreign language teachers may need to rethink their own pedagogy for explicit vocabulary instruction. Andrew Sheehan (2004) states, “Teachers will have to gain expertise in vocabulary development principles and techniques so that they can provide appropriate introduction, storage, and retrieval activities for their students” (p. 5). Collocations, polywords, institutionalized sentences, and sentence heads should become part of a teacher’s knowledge base.
- (2) Word associations and lexical phrases have an important role to play in intermediate and advanced syllabi. Exploring the “grammar” of a word means teaching collocations and some of the institutionalized sentences in which it figures.
- (3) Developing vocabulary in a systematic and ongoing way has implications for articulation and textbook assessment. Programs may need to assess the ways in which vocabulary is expanded and enriched across course boundaries. Teachers involved with textbook selection may wish to pay more attention to various issues of vocabulary learning, such as how polysemic words are recycled throughout the book.
- (4) Students need to realize that developing their lexical knowledge is a long-term process. Maintaining a personal lexicon with frequent additions is one way for them to realize the incremental nature of vocabulary development.
- (5) Dictionary usage is an important tool about which students need to be informed. For example, knowledge of the formats that dictionaries use to present additional meanings and collocations of words is vital to students, especially at the intermediate and advanced levels. Walz (1990a) has made an important case for teaching dictionary usage and has suggested many learning activities for encoding and decoding words with both monolingual and bilingual dictionaries. He further maintains that dictionaries are authentic documents that can serve as primary sources for developing both lexical and cultural knowledge (1990b).

Expanding and enriching the lexis should figure as important activities for explicit vocabulary instruction. By going beyond the individual word to its associations (synonyms, antonyms, superordinates, etc.) and the language chunks in

which it is found (collocations, polywords, sentence heads, and institutionalized sentences), teachers can help students build their lexicon and increase their communicative ability.

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# 3

## The Reading Process: Realistic Expectations for Reading in Lower-Level Language Courses

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### Abstract

*Teaching reading in lower-level language courses does not mean teaching classical literary texts to students who are just beginning to learn the intricacies of another language. We must separate the pragmatic realities of introducing students to a new language, of delving into a text written in that language, and of understanding the essence of the author's message from the cognitive performance of analyzing a text and of being able to read between the lines. Students will begin to reach the level of reading abilities that we anticipate and expect in upper-level courses only when they have been taught how to read—how to approach a text written in another language.*

Handing the . . . student a foreign literature for discussion and analysis is like handing a child a sealed jar of candy. He may see what is inside and like what is inside, but he is less likely to get fed than frustrated and disgusted. Teaching him to open the jar lets him get at the contents, sort them out and appreciate the quality of the mixture. (Morgenroth, 1969, p. 57)

### The Problem

In the *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines* for reading (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, 1986), we are informed that language learners at the Advanced-Plus level are “able to understand parts of texts which are conceptually abstract and linguistically complex, and/or texts which treat unfamiliar topics and situations, as well as some texts which involve aspects of target-language culture. An emerging awareness of the aesthetic properties of language and of its literary styles permits comprehension of a wider variety of texts, including literary. Misunderstandings may occur” (n. p.).

Advanced-Plus? This level of reading proficiency is certainly far beyond the level of students in our lower-level language courses, indeed beyond the level of most students in our bridge courses—those that span the gap between beginning- and intermediate-level and upper-level instruction, and often beyond the level of

many of our majors. Yet many instructors at the college and university level insist on baptizing their students in the streams of the literary canon at the same time that they are learning to plod their way through the intricacies of object pronouns, verb tenses, and prepositions.

Reading is an interactive process that goes on between the reader and the text, resulting in comprehension. The text presents letters, words, sentences, and paragraphs that encode meaning. The reader uses knowledge, skills, and strategies to determine what that meaning is.” (National Capital Language Resource Center [NCLRC], 2004).

The communicative approach to language teaching has given us a new point of view about reading and about the types of texts that students should be given to read. The traditional approach to teaching reading was aimed at the introduction of formal literature, but only after students had been trained to read a language by studying its grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure. Reading authentic texts by famous authors was reserved for upper-level courses (NCLRC, 2004). At times, these texts were prematurely, and often unsuccessfully, introduced in lower-level courses.

With the current focus on communicative competence, we find that the range of types of materials that are relevant to students is now significantly broader, including train schedules, Web sites, and newspaper articles, among others. Reading such materials is excellent preparation for eventually reading formal literary texts. Once students realize that they possess the skills to approach a text written in another language and experience success in extracting the meaning from that text, whatever it may be, they will be less intimidated and more comfortable when handed a text that is more challenging, less familiar, and more culturally steeped.

In her article on reshaping the college-level curriculum, Dorothy James (1989) reminds us that the skills needed to succeed in lower-level foreign language courses, including conversation and composition classes, are fundamentally different from those needed to appreciate and to engage in analysis of literary texts written for educated speakers of the target language. She is not only talking about linguistic skills, but also about those skills and strategies that are necessary for approaching a text with appropriate insight, techniques, abilities, and persistence; in short, for opening that sealed jar of candy.

The greatest disconnect in our traditional college curriculum is most strongly felt at the point at which “students proceed with little ceremony from skills acquisition courses to the study of literature” (James, 1989, p. 85). The big disservice is not the concentration on literature itself but the attempt to teach literature and literary criticism without having taught the requisite skills that allow students to have access to a text in another language. Almost all of our upper-level courses have traditionally been literature courses conducted entirely in the language, and we have expected our students to perform with Superior-level abilities in both the productive and receptive skill areas. As James (1989) points out, Superior-level speakers can state and defend opinions, describe in detail, hypothesize, and deal

with abstract topics; Advanced-level speakers cannot. Similarly, Superior-level readers can “read with almost complete comprehension and at normal speed expository prose on unfamiliar subjects and a variety of literary texts”; Advanced-level readers cannot (ACTFL, 1986). We know that proficiency level, such as Superior or Advanced, has little correlation with learners’ academic training. Upper-level students do not all perform at the same level of proficiency; some might (and do) remain at the Intermediate-High level.

The *linguistic* skills, knowledge, and abilities needed to participate in an introduction to a foreign literature, often a survey course, as well as in a course on particular authors of foreign language classics are the same: a firm foundation and understanding of the second language and how it works. Where the differences lie is in access to the knowledge of literary principles, an historical perspective on the development and precepts of literary movements, and the different theoretical approaches to the interpretation of literature, whether in English or in another language. Students in upper-level courses bring with them varying backgrounds—personal knowledge and experiences, different approaches to literature, and literary interpretations. Expecting students to be able to carry out an *explication de texte* when they often cannot even understand the general idea of the text leads to frustration. Expecting students to be able to write an *explication de texte* when they have not been trained to do so is equally frustrating.

The focus of this article is not on the teaching of literature but on the appropriate developmental training that will enable our students to approach a text, confident that they know how to decode the text, decipher the meaning, discover the message, and “appreciate the quality of the mixture” (Morgenroth, 1969, p. 57).

Where and when are students supposed to receive the needed training in reading in a second language? In textbooks? In class?

Most textbooks offer a varied selection of texts, ranging from complete authentic texts drawn from current magazines, newspapers, and other popular publications to poems, short stories, and snippets of longer contemporary or older literary texts. But there are potential drawbacks to the use of either type, especially if training in how to read is not included.

Many language textbooks emphasize product (answers to comprehension questions) over process (using reading skills and strategies to understand the text), providing little or no contextual information about the reading selections or their authors, and few if any pre-reading, strategy training, and post-reading activities. Newer textbooks may provide pre-reading activities and reading strategy guidance, but their one-size-fits-all approach may or may not be appropriate for your students. (NCLRC, 2004)

This one-size-fits-all approach is perhaps not the best way to train students how to read, since they come to foreign language classes with widely varied backgrounds, personal experiences, world knowledge, and abilities. The NCLRC suggests using textbook reading activities, but with the following caution: “Use existing, or add your own, pre-reading activities and reading strategy practice as appropriate

for your students. Don't make students do exercises simply because they are in the book; this destroys motivation" (2004). Quite often, textbook reading selections are adapted to a predetermined reading level by judicious glossing, and adjustment of vocabulary, grammar, and structures. While such editing makes the text more immediately accessible, it also destroys the authenticity of the original text and encourages students

to apply the reading strategies they will need to use outside of class. When this is the case, use the textbook reading selection as a starting point to introduce a writer or topic, and then give students choices of more challenging authentic texts to read as a followup." (NCLRC, 2004)

The most logical time to learn how to read a text written in another language is when the student is learning that language—in lower-level secondary level or college/university language courses. Students should have already received training in reading a second-language (L2) text before they enroll in advanced high school honors, Advanced Placement (AP), or International Baccalaureate (IB) courses, and before they continue their post-secondary study in bridge courses and subsequent upper-level classes.

Just as the ability to use a language itself is developmental, so is the ability to read texts in that language. There is no miracle that occurs at the completion of an intermediate-level college course that imbues students with the ability to approach a new text. They have not developed reading abilities and do not have the requisite background knowledge and cultural insight that will enable them to talk about what the text means, to understand what the author intends, and to express what the implications of the text are. Most often, students are bewildered by the vocabulary, the intricacies of structure, and the style of the text, often missing even the gist of what they have read. Zvetina (1987) cautions that when cognitive attention is focused on the development of lower-level language skills (pronunciation, vocabulary, etc.), higher-level processing is roadblocked, and students become frustrated, often seeing the task as unpleasant and uninteresting.

## **The Tools**

Many networks of information come into play for interpreting texts. Reading is an interaction between the text and the reader, and the degree of comprehension varies according to a number of text features and reader characteristics. A text includes the features of discourse, vocabulary, and grammar. Reader characteristics include not only language proficiency, attitudes, and motivation, but also background knowledge (Cohen, 1994).

Background knowledge comes from one of three sources:

1. *Content schemata*: systems of factual knowledge, values, and cultural conventions;
2. *Language schemata*: sentence structure, grammatical inflections, spelling and punctuation, vocabulary, and cohesive structures;
3. *Textual schemata*: the rhetorical structure of different types of text, such as recipes, fairy tales, letters, research papers, and science textbooks.

Reading can be approached using *top-down* or *bottom-up* processing. In top-down processing, readers approach the text based on content that they are already familiar with, language, or textual schemata that they already possess about that particular text. When top-down processing is not successful, readers resort to bottom-up processing, focusing exclusively on what is present in the text itself, and especially on the words and sentences of the text. Bottom-up processing is often referred to as text-based or data-driven. Successful readers usually combine both types of processing, using top-down to compensate for deficiencies in bottom-up, and vice versa (Cohen, 1994). It is through guided training in the use of reading strategies and types of processing that students will develop a sense of comfort and satisfaction in having decoded texts with a degree of comprehension that satisfies both the students and the teacher.

There are three deficiencies that students often experience that create obstacles to reading and understanding: lack of world knowledge, lack of linguistic information, and lack of experience with various text types. Byrnes (1985) cautions that language itself has an obvious limitation: it depends completely on the world of human experience for its meaning, since meaning is not found directly in language and is not available directly through decoding.

### **Choosing the Right Text**

Reading is an activity with a purpose. A person may read in order to gain information or verify existing knowledge, or in order to critique a writer's ideas or writing style. A person may also read for enjoyment, or to enhance knowledge of the language being read. The purpose(s) for reading guide the reader's selection of texts. (NCLRC, 2004).

To develop readers, teachers should select texts depending on the purpose(s) for reading, the ability levels of the students, their age and experience, and the degree of comprehension that is expected, but all should have a meaning or communicative purpose for students to explore.

In the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines for Reading (1986), the various phrases that refer to the types of reading materials that are most appropriate for readers at different proficiency levels can give us guidance in selecting appropriate texts and in understanding realistic and feasible degrees of comprehension (See Figure 1. next page).

**Figure 1****Proficiency Levels and Characteristics of Appropriate Text Types**

(It is assumed that all texts are authentic and legible.)

<b>Proficiency Level</b>	<b>Text Characteristics</b>
Novice-Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>isolated words; major phrases strongly supported by context</li> </ul>
Novice-Mid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>highly contextualized words or phrases</li> </ul>
Novice-High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>areas of practical need (instructional or directional purposes)</li> <li>supportive context and/or extralinguistic background knowledge</li> </ul>
Intermediate-Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>connected texts dealing with basic personal and social needs</li> <li>linguistically noncomplex with clear underlying structure (e.g., chronological sequencing)</li> </ul>
Intermediate-Mid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>simple connected texts dealing with variety of basic and social needs</li> <li>linguistically noncomplex with clear underlying structure (e.g., chronological sequencing)</li> </ul>
Intermediate-High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>simple connected texts dealing with basic and social needs about which reader has personal interest and/or knowledge.</li> <li>structural complexity may interfere with comprehension</li> </ul>
Advanced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>somewhat longer prose of several paragraphs in length, particularly with clear underlying structure</li> <li>predominantly familiar sentence patterns</li> <li>descriptions and narrations</li> </ul>
Advanced-Plus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>areas of special interest or knowledge</li> <li>wider variety of texts, including literary</li> </ul>
Superior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>expository prose on unfamiliar subjects and a variety of literary texts, editorials, correspondence, general reports, and technical material in professional fields</li> <li>texts feature hypotheses, argumentation, and supported opinions and include grammatical patterns and vocabulary ordinarily encountered in academic and professional reading</li> </ul>

Texts should clearly be authentic and meaningful to any reader; that is, texts should be read by students for the same purposes as they are read by native speakers. This authenticity invites reading for meaning, and extracting meaning from a text should be any reader's primary goal. In addition, of equal importance to the meaningfulness of the text is the reader's interest in the content. Why should we ask our students to read something in which they have no interest when we ourselves would not read anything that does not interest us?

The NCLRC (2004) reminds us that what students read should contain the kind of material the students will need and want to be able to read outside of the foreign language classroom. They should read for purposes that make sense and are relevant to them, and they should read the text in ways that match the purpose for reading, the type of text, and the way people normally read.

We should remember that authentic texts are *not* written for use in lower-level language courses. We should also remember that it is not so much the difficulty of the text that we present to our students as much as it is the task that we ask them to carry out using that text. Because students at any level can approach an authentic text, there is no need to invent or greatly adapt; it is what we ask them to do with the text that is all-important. These are the essential questions that we need to ask when selecting a text:

1. What is the purpose of the reading activity?
2. Will the students be interested in or even care about the content of the text; that is, does the text have a purpose or significance for them?
3. How do we want them to read the text—to find a specific piece of information or to get the gist?
4. What degree of comprehension is expected—accuracy and detail or global understanding?

Underlying these four questions are two essential considerations: Do the readers have the linguistic knowledge to approach such a text? Do the readers have the appropriate general experience and knowledge of the world, that is, background knowledge, to approach the text with any degree of understanding?

Phillips (1984), in talking of developing reading activities, cautions that “teachers, testers, and material designers should keep in mind the purpose of the reading and design questions to check comprehension relevant to the task and not geared to a depth rarely required in real life” (p. 289). It is important to remember that reading “is not a *perceptual* process which differentiates one set of figures on a page from another set of figures on a page; . . . it is a *conceptual* process in which the reader identifies meanings from words and generates a text meaning from a set of individual meanings” (Bernhardt, 1986, p. 95). The comprehension demanded and expected of our students should be commensurate with their level of language study, their age, and reasonable world experience.

Again, referring to the *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines* for reading (ACTFL, 1986), we find that the degree of comprehension is compromised by the premature introduction of linguistically complex texts in which the readers have little personal interest and about which they have little or no knowledge. For example,

- *Novice-Mid*: Material understood rarely exceeds a single phrase at a time, and rereading may be required.
- *Novice-High*: At times, but not on a consistent basis, . . . may be able to derive meaning from material at a slightly higher level where context and/or extralinguistic background knowledge are supportive.
- *Intermediate-Low*: Texts impart basic information about which the reader has to make only minimal suppositions or to which the reader brings personal interest and/or knowledge.
- *Intermediate-High*: While tests do not differ significantly from those at the Advanced level, comprehension is less consistent.
- *Advanced*: Comprehension derives not only from situational and subject matter knowledge but from increasing control of language.
- *Advanced-Plus*: Able to comprehend the facts to make appropriate inferences
- *Superior*: Able to read with almost complete comprehension and at normal speed expository prose on unfamiliar subjects and a variety of literary texts. (ACTFL, 1986)

Comprehension improves as knowledge about the situation and the subject matter broadens and as control of the language increases.

Reader knowledge, skills, and strategies are based on the four aspects of communicative competence, which include

- *Linguistic competence*: the ability to recognize the elements of the writing system; knowledge of vocabulary; knowledge of how words are structured into sentences;
- *Discourse competence*: knowledge of discourse markers and how they connect parts of the text to one another;
- *Sociolinguistic competence*: knowledge about different types of texts and their usual structure and content; and
- *Strategic competence*: the ability to use top-down strategies—the use of prior content, language or awareness of textual schemata (format) that the reader already has with regard to the particular text—as well as knowledge of the language (a bottom-up strategy). (NCLRC, 2004)

We must come back to the following practical facts: Students will not understand or appreciate a text when they (1) have no interest in the topic, (2) see no purpose or significance in reading the text, (3) have no knowledge of the subject matter or prior experience in similar situations, and (4) do not really know how to approach a text written in another language, because of unknown linguistic features, the lack of strategies and training, and the lack of experience reading in



another language. We cannot assume that because our students are competent readers in their first language (L1), they are competent readers in their L2. Hosenfeld, Arnold, Kirchofer, Laciura, and Wilson (1981), in their landmark article on second language reading, remind us that “The commonly held notion that proficient, native language readers transfer their reading skills to the second language is being challenged by the findings of several studies” (p. 416). In Clarke’s study with adult, good and poor native language readers (1978), it was found that the ability of groups reading in their native language (Spanish) diminished considerably in reading the second language (English). Hosenfeld herself (1980), gathered findings that supported Clarke’s findings in several case studies of adolescent, native speakers of English learning Spanish and French.

### Reading Strategies

Training students how to use reading strategies effectively is the teacher’s key to overcoming the problems of teaching reading in another language. As people read, they employ an arsenal of strategies for bringing meaning to the text. However, these readers are most often very unaware of the strategies that they use; they simply use them without knowing it. One of our first tasks is to make students aware of the strategies that they use when they are reading, by having them self-report and by having them identify their strategies. Hosenfeld et al. (1981) say that we should help students “understand the concept of *strategy* and to recognize that some strategies are successful, some unsuccessful, and others only ‘seemingly’ successful” (p. 417). In continuing their curricular sequence of activities for teaching reading strategies, these authors then suggest that we help students identify strategies they use to decode English texts containing unknown words and then identify strategies they can use to decode foreign language texts that contain unknown words.

In carrying out this training of our students, we should find texts—texts in English to begin with—that clearly illustrate the principles of using reading skills strategies in decoding the text. A classic example is an extract from the poem “Jabberwocky” by Lewis Carroll (2004):

’Twas brillig, and the slithy toves  
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;  
All mimsy were the borogroves,  
And the mome raths outgrabe.

By asking students strategic questions on the interpretation of this nonsensical poem, we can prove to them that they bring with them a significant depth of prior knowledge that will help them understand a text. Sample questions include

- What is the expression “’Twas”?
- What part of speech is the word “brillig”? How do you know?
- What part of speech is “toves”? Is it singular or plural?
- What is “slithy”? Do you think it has a negative or a positive connotation? Why?

- What are the words “gyre” and “gimble”?
- Is the word “wabe” a noun? How can you tell?
- In the phrase “the mome raths outgrabe,” what is the function of each of these words?

Students will see that their knowledge of English word order—typically subject-verb-object—can be transferred to French and Spanish. Words appear in a certain order to convey a certain meaning. Morphological features (markers of singular and plural, verb endings, and the form of modal auxiliaries) do indeed serve a clear purpose. By extension, familiarity with the structure and morphological features of the target language serve similar purposes. This is strategy training, and this is what can make students effective and efficient readers in another language.

Key terms that are often used in reading strategies are *predict, analyze, recognize, infer, relate, recognize, identify, make use of, interpret, and summarize*. Students should realize that reading does not involve delving for the deep meaning when they pick up a text for the first time. They should never overlook the obvious: What kind of text is this? A recipe? A classified ad? A newspaper article? A fairy tale? How do you know? (The obvious includes titles and illustrations.) They should then skim for the main idea, establishing a general context. They should find the main parts of the text. They should scan for cognates and infer the meaning of those words. They should try to recognize and analyze the tone of the text through words with positive or negative connotations.

One major hurdle to overcome is dependence on a bilingual dictionary. The reader should rely on the use of context and logic for making educated guesses about the meaning of words and not on the interlinear or marginal listing of English equivalents for each and every word. As Hosenfeld et al. (1981) have said, there are good guesses and there are bad guesses. We must make our students comfortable with making guesses.

In Portuguese, for example, there is the word “frango,” a word that has no similar form in any other Romance language. Taken out of context, one would be hard put to figure out the meaning of this word. Put in context, however, the meaning becomes very clear: “Which came first, the ‘frango’ or the egg?”

Teaching students about word families can extend their passive vocabulary. In French, the word “feuille” means ‘leaf.’ What does the verb “feuilleter” mean (“You \_\_\_\_\_ through a magazine.”)? In the spring, trees are “effeuillés.” If “vingt” means ‘twenty’ in French and if the suffix “-aine” means ‘about, approximately,’ then what can “une vingtaine” mean? A similar use of context and guessing has already been shown with the extract from the poem “Jabberwocky.” Students should be encouraged to continue reading and to abandon the mindset that there must be complete comprehension, because complete comprehension is unrealistic for anyone, either in L1 or in L2! Teachers have been guilty of fostering this attitude in students, since in the past they have asked “reading comprehension” questions that call for the location and reporting of minutiae and insignificant information. Quite often, the question is lifted directly from the text, and students do nothing more than look for the key word in the question in the body of the text and copy the

sentence where it appears with no knowledge of what the sentence means. If students are told that they are expected to get the gist of the text, then questions that go beyond the gist and ask for extraneous detail undermine what the teacher has said. Teachers often fail to determine if the students have even grasped the main message of the text.

Now, how can teachers integrate strategy training into their classrooms? Teaching another language does not mean teaching language alone, since language alone means nothing. Language exists to be used—to convey meaning; to create, maintain, or terminate social relationships; and to give or seek information. We cannot assume that students have the requisite linguistic knowledge for analyzing, interpreting, inferring, or even “cracking the code.” We cannot assume that students have the cultural background that underlies the second language. If the purpose of reading is to extract meaning from the text, then we must train students to do just that.

Learning another language is developmental, but the development is not linear and is not arithmetic. Instead, it is cyclical and geometric: the longer one studies a language, the more linguistic and extralinguistic elements recur, and the broader the knowledge base becomes. Just as grammar, vocabulary, and structures are taught and recycled, so are learning and reading strategies. As different texts are introduced, so are different and appropriate strategies. A wider array of texts calls for a wider array of strategies, all of which can be recycled. Practice leads to success. A young child is not put on a bicycle and told, “Ride!” A pilot is not put in an airplane and told, “Fly!” A student is not given a book and told, “Read!”

## Conclusion

As Bernhardt (1991) says: “Ultimately, it is the teacher who possesses the appropriate and accurate knowledge sources needed to equip students to interpret texts in a culturally appropriate manner” (p. 187). She says that students need to be given the resources they need as individuals to cope with second language texts.

And what are these resources?

- an appropriate text
- prereading activities
- a carefully guided first reading
- a close reading and analysis of the text
- a meaningful conclusion to the activity, including reactions, observations, and questions from the students; and an expansion of the information gathered from the reading to other aspects of the particular course or to other disciplines.

Textbook authors and teachers need to be judicious in selecting reading passages and not assume that because they think the text is interesting, their students will exhibit the same interest. The fact that a text is on the same theme as a particular chapter in the textbook does not mean that students will appreciate or understand either the relevance or the text.

Reading is a process, an interaction between the reader and the text. Meaning is encoded in the text, and the reader must use a full arsenal of resources to decode the text and determine the meaning. But reading is much more than simply decoding, since the purpose(s) for reading and the particular type of text determine the specific skills, knowledge, and strategies that readers need to apply to comprehend the text. Such knowledge, skills, and strategies are the arsenal of resources that are needed. "Reading comprehension results when the reader knows which skills and strategies are appropriate for the type of text and understands how to apply them to accomplish the reading purpose" (NCLRC, 2004)

Teachers obviously contribute to the students' knowledge base, expanding the L2 reader's world knowledge and experiences. Teachers develop in students the skills to become functional participants in another language, but this development is slow yet incremental. Students have developed reading strategies in their native language and most often are unaware of them; they simply read and try to extract meaning from the text. Teachers need to bring these strategies to the surface and encourage students to implement them as they approach a text in another language.

In the reader's native language, the development of the skill to read and understand a variety of texts spans the student's entire academic career. A first-grader is not expected to read *Time*, e. e. cummings, or Shakespeare, even though the student is a native speaker of English. Why then should an L2 learner in a lower-level class be expected to read *El Diario*, Goethe, or Molière when that student's language ability and world experience in the target culture are at a very low level?

Reading should be a pleasure, whether it is reading in one's own language or in another language. Reading should not be a challenge that is so impractical or unrealistic that students fail to grasp and comprehend the teacher's enthusiasm for a text. Do not simply hand students that sealed jar of candy but teach them to open the jar themselves and savor what their teachers find so wonderful.

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# 4

## Improving Foreign Language Writing Competence

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### Abstract

*Process writing has long been used in English-language composition and English as a Second Language courses, and in recent years it has been adopted in foreign language classes as well. Nevertheless, many teachers and learners still see foreign language writing as an exercise in perfecting grammar and vocabulary. Explicit instruction on the process of insightful writing is unusual in the foreign language classroom. This article presents a study of third-year Spanish courses and addresses (1) whether the different modalities of error correction promote improvement of writing skills and (2) whether students' awareness of the processes of reading and writing favors the development of the necessary abilities that will be required in more advanced courses. This study identifies the processes that allow students to acknowledge and address strengths and weaknesses that are not necessarily tied to grammatical competence. Findings show that regardless of the explicitness of the corrections, students performed better when electronic feedback was used and when they were aware of both reading and writing processes.*

### Background

The field of second language (L2) writing has raised theoretical concerns about how students improve writing skills. While some authors have viewed *process writing* as the optimum way to improve the skill (Roca de Larios, Murphy, & Marín, 2002; Scott, 1996; Susser, 1994; Zamel, 1983), others have explored the effects of error feedback on writing proficiency (Ferris, 1995, 1999; Ferris and Roberts, 2001; Lalande, 1982; Robb, Ross, & Shortreed, 1986; Semke, 1984; Truscott, 1996, 1999), and the processes involved in reading-to-write (Carson, 1993; Flower, et al., 1990; Ruiz-Funes, 2001).

Since the 1970s, studies present writing as a “recursive, nonlinear cognitive process in which the writer moves back and forth between prewriting, writing, revising, and editing until he/she is satisfied with his/her creation” (Flower & Hayes, 1981). Research in the last 10 years has moved towards a more comprehensive theory of L2 writing, and an examination of the notion that first language (L1) and L2 writing are the same “has led L2 writing specialists to rely for direction almost exclusively on L1 composition theories” (Silva, 1993). Reichelt (1999) has found

an increase since 1990 in studies on foreign language (FL) writing other than English. She has also noticed that many of the researchers consider themselves language teachers rather than writing teachers, thus supporting the notion that “FL writing is currently seen more as ‘foreign language’ than ‘writing’” (p. 182).

This study contributes to the discussion by incorporating several strategies into an intermediate course of the language sequence at a large state university that has, according to students’ observations collected over the past five years, become a place where many undergo a difficult transition between lower- and upper-division courses. The observations of students’ struggles to improve their foreign language skills raised the questions of whether certain conditions favor or hinder the development of necessary abilities that are required in advanced courses.

Kern and Schultz (1992) indicate that preparation of students is crucial to promotion because “in the upper-level courses students are expected to read articles and literary selections and to react and respond to them in an insightful and critical manner” (p. 2). Ruiz-Funes (1999) also emphasizes the contrast in tasks in advanced courses, where “reading and writing requirements begin to demand more higher-order cognitive skills, instruction tends to focus on the mastery of the linguistic elements . . . , and teachers tend to use writing-process and reading-process instruction independently from each other” (p. 45). Explicit instruction in the processes of critical reading and insightful writing is unusual in the FL classroom. As Kern and Schultz point out, some teachers and learners still see FL writing as an exercise in perfecting grammar and vocabulary:

Writing in lower-division language courses traditionally consists of fill-in-the-blank workbook exercises and occasional descriptive essays about personal topics such as friends, family, and vacations. In these writing tasks, the focus is usually on surface feature accuracy rather than on the development, organization, and effective expression of the students’ own thoughts or ideas. (p. 2)

This study investigates the conditions that favor the development of writing skills and questions whether some areas are not meant to be improved at this point. The term *process writing*, as used in this project, refers to pre-writing, drafting, feedback, and revising, as part of a non-linear model. It follows the two tenets of process writing described by Susser (1994): awareness and intervention. The concept also departs from the personal introspective paradigm prevalent in L1 and L2 writing courses that obviously addresses more advanced writers than those who participated in this study.

According to Ruiz-Funes (1999), research on reading-to-write in FL belongs to two categories: (a) narrowing the intermediate/advanced-level gap and (b) teaching literature in order to develop higher cognitive skills. Students in advanced levels are often required to write essays for which previous work has not prepared them intellectually. Since intermediate writing is usually circumscribed by narration and description, students lack the necessary tools to approach writing an argumentative essay and “engage in a complex process that includes exploration of a problem,



evaluation of facts and evidences, generation and testing of hypotheses in relation to new ideas and evidence” (p. 521). In order to overcome these problems, students need to be aware that good writing is not just grammatically accurate and that other factors, such as organization, coherence, and use of cohesive devices, are essential elements of good writing.

This study also compares the use of handwritten comments to electronic corrections and their effects on students’ revisions of composition errors. For the handwritten comments, two items were implemented: an adaptation of the Essay Correction Code (ECCO) and the Error Awareness Sheet (EASE) (Lalande, 1982). For the electronic corrections, Ferris’s (2001) model of “treatable” and “untreatable” errors was adopted. (See Appendix A.)

### Process Writing

The adaptation of L1 *process writing* approach into FL writing practices seems to have taken one of its least pedagogical modalities, breaking down the process into stages that “not only violate what we know about the recursive nature of writing, [but that distort] a responsible pedagogy into a didactic one” (Susser, 1994, p. 35). Although English as a Second Language (ESL) writing theory is already in the *post-process* era, addressing genre and social issues, it is still necessary to point out the controversy about *process writing*. In his detailed discussion of process approaches in L2 writing, Susser mentions that disagreement was caused by the association of *process* pedagogies with numerous writing theories, the gap between educational theory and practice, and the fact that *process* became a synonym for theories of writing. *Process writing* emerged as a response to pedagogies that emphasized the composed product rather than the writing process. *Process writing* is characterized by the *awareness* by the writer of the writing process and the *intervention* of a teacher, or peers, at any time during the process of writing in order to improve writing skills instead of exclusively fixing mistakes (pp. 34-35). In foreign language studies (i.e., other than ESL or EFL [English as a Foreign Language]), writing progress has been measured by accuracy. Similarly, Dvorak (1986) concludes that beyond the intermediate level, “composition skill has been defined primarily in terms of *language* development” demonstrated by the main preoccupation of research that focuses on “how to reduce and repair error damage” (p. 162).

### Reading-to-Write

*Reading-to-write* is defined as a task that requires students to write an essay based on the reading of an assigned source text. Such tasks may require students to read texts that have a variety of topics and orientations (Kern & Schultz, 1992; Ruiz-Funes, 1999). Stein’s (1990) reading-to-write-in-L1 hypothesis proposes the following steps: (1) *monitoring*: the writer uses the original text to supervise his/her progress; (2) *elaborating*: the writer combines the source text with prior knowledge of the topic, creating new ideas; (3) *structuring*: the writer reorganizes information from the source to the new text; and (4) *planning*: the writer moves from reading to writing. If reading-to-write were similar in L2 and L1, it would be

necessary to look at the cognitive processes involved in the act of reading in order to understand it and help students develop the skill. In addition to all of the cognitive processes, however, the FL student has to decode the text in order to interact with it.

### Effects of Error Correction on FL Writing

Most students expect and value the feedback they receive in writing, and research has shown that there seems to be a connection between active correction of errors and improvement in writing skills. Ferris (1995) emphasizes the importance that students give to writing accurately and their perceived need to obtain corrections from the instructor. An important factor mentioned by Truscott (1996), who, incidentally, opposes grammar correction, is the necessity of not treating every linguistic category (lexicon, syntax, and morphology) as equivalent, since these categories represent separate learning domains that are acquired during different stages and through different processes. Nevertheless, most researchers (Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Lalande, 1982; Robb, Ross, & Shortreed, 1986; Semke, 1984) agree that corrections are useful for the students as long as they are consistent and systematic. In his study about the effects of graded versus ungraded compositions, Chastain (1990) found that although there was no significant difference between the number and types of errors, “in some ways the expectation of a grade may influence student’s writing in some positive ways. . . . Students in this study wrote longer papers containing longer sentences and a higher number of complex sentences” (p. 14). Corrections place an importance on what is corrected; thus exclusive surface-level error correction places emphasis on form.

Over the years, correction of written production has provoked some controversy. Several studies (Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Lalande, 1982; Terry, 1989; Zamel, 1983) endorse differing approaches to written correction, which can be separated into two main categories: (a) *explicit* (direct): the instructor indicates the error and provides the correct form and (b) *non-explicit* (indirect): the instructor marks the error in some fashion (underlined, highlighted, coded, etc.), and the student has to determine the correction. Some researchers (Chastain, 1990; Ruiz-Funes, 2001; Scott, 1996) have adapted Lalande’s (1982) ECCO to provide students with an indication of the type of errors without giving the correct answer. This procedure has become a common classroom practice that encourages learning through problem-solving. Ferris and Roberts (2001) established five main categories of errors: verbs, noun-endings, articles, lexicon, and sentence structure (p. 169), and they have found that by using these five categories, students are more successful at correcting errors even in such areas as word choice and sentence structure. In a different study, Ferris (1999) classifies errors as *treatable* (patterned and rule-governed) or *untreatable* (errors for which there is no set of rules that students can consult to avoid making mistakes). For the latter she recommends a combination of direct correction and a set of strategies exclusive to this type of error.

For language students it is very important to understand that there is no ideal model for writing and that they are not being compared to native speakers or more

proficient classmates. Instructors need to remember that one cannot expect the second language learner to be able to write like an educated native speaker. As Yates and Kenkel (2002) point out, “To compare the learners’ knowledge to native speaker knowledge commits the comparative fallacy and provides incomplete insight into what principles the learner had” (p. 34). Therefore, the scoring instrument should reflect the kinds of tasks that are done in the classroom.

### **The Project: Description and Method**

This research examines the following questions: (1) What effect do different modalities of *error correction* have on students’ self-editing abilities? (2) What is the effect of awareness of the processes of reading and writing on quality of writing?

### **Participants**

The participants are 35 university students enrolled in Intermediate Spanish III (fifth-semester). In order to ensure the homogeneity of the sample, all participants (a) were native speakers of English, (b) had received two to four semesters of formal instruction in Spanish at the university level, (c) had scored 80% or less on a listening comprehension pretest, and (d) had scored less than 80% on a diagnostic composition. Participants in group A ( $n = 16$ ) were selected out of 25 students who took the course; group B participants ( $n = 19$ ) were selected out of 32 students. Only those participants who met all criteria listed above were included in the study. The score on the diagnostic test (less than 80%) was determined as representative of the average student’s writing at this institution. Both sections were taught by the researcher in consecutive semesters.

### **Procedures**

The fifth-semester course places an emphasis on the development of the four skills necessary to succeed in advanced courses. Grammar is never explicitly discussed. Students are encouraged to identify structures with which they have problems and work on them either by talking to the professor, consulting a tutor, or downloading handouts from the on-line course management system, Web Course Tools (WebCT).

This study examines 140 samples of a corpus of  $N = 280$  (first draft and final version of the two compositions). The first composition is used for diagnostic purposes and is part of other diagnostic instruments that measure motivation, grammatical judgment, listening comprehension, and oral proficiency. Students are also asked to rank the importance of language skills (see Appendix A), using a survey adapted from Alalou and Chamberlain (1999).

Students wrote all their compositions on a word processor in the language lab. The use of word-processing for the writing component of the course presents many benefits for students and instructors. Grennia (1992) reports that students using the word processor wrote three to seven times more than those who used traditional

methods and that the instructors “always have a clean, legible copy and unlimited space for responses” (p. 35). Smith (1990) found that students engaged in writing as a process using computers developed more fluency, and their writing was more expressive. Scott (1996) recognizes more advantages in the use of word-processors for teaching foreign language writing: First, “the computer environment provides a good opportunity for implementing a process-oriented approach to teaching FL writing” (p. 94); second, there is a notable improvement in textual coherence attained by revising and correcting ideas and surface-level features using the computer.

### **Out-of-Class Writing**

During the semester, students in Group A ( $n = 16$ ) turned in 15 journal entries in four installments, after the discussions of every three or four topics. The instructor made comments to indicate that the entries had been read. Grammatical errors were not marked, but the instructor made observations regarding the comprehensibility of each entry. The use of the journals was meant to build fluency. Casanave’s (2004) students reported that they spent less time writing the same number of words at the end of the semester. Some wrote more accurately or wrote with more details and expressiveness. In contrast, in this study most students wrote extremely short entries, in many instances no more than four sentences per entry. In the last entry students were asked to comment on their strategies for journal writing and on the perceived benefits of the tasks. Ten participants indicated that they would have liked to have had their grammar corrected in order to develop accuracy. Nine mentioned that they wrote all the entries in one session, thus defeating the purpose of journal writing all together.

In contrast, students in Group B ( $n = 19$ ) submitted 15 reading comprehension exercises corresponding to class assignments. The entries were marked for content, organization, and accuracy. Students turned in their writing portfolio for a grade twice during the semester. Full credit was given only if all corrections had been made. In the introduction to the final portfolio, students were asked to comment on their approach to revising errors, their use of the source text, and the perceived benefits of writing a portfolio. Twelve students reported to have used their first-year Spanish book instead of a dictionary or a grammar book as a reference because the explanations were clear and concise. Eight students mentioned the difficulty of writing their own sentences using a source text. These students had a tendency to copy sentences literally from the source text, sometimes using fragments that did not convey complete ideas. These problems were not encountered in the compositions because tasks were designed to create a new text using the source instead of demonstrating reading comprehension. Regarding the benefits of writing a portfolio, nine participants admitted that they had waited until the deadline to make corrections for all the entries, a practice that resulted in a progressive decline in successful corrections.

## **In-Class Activities**

### *Prewriting*

Both groups engaged in prewriting activities in the classroom, the success or failure of which depended mainly on the completion of the homework assignments. In order to provide models of writing, participants read three to four short essays from the textbook or other sources. After each reading, the class discussed the content of the selection as well as the characteristics of the genre, the tone, the theme, and so forth. Participants worked in groups on one or more of the following tasks: surveying classmates, expressing agreement or disagreement, expressing preferences, comparing and contrasting, and narrating a personal experience to illustrate a point of view. During this stage, students shared ideas and tested hypotheses orally, and each group presented a summary of its findings to the class.

Participants in Group A received both a prewriting worksheet that required them to write an outline of their composition and a list of words (nouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs, etc.) that they saw as being useful for the topic. Students were encouraged to compare their lists with those of their classmates and share information. The worksheets were evaluated for completion, and students were allowed to use them while writing their compositions, as long as they had not written complete sentences on them.

Participants in Group B received a prewriting worksheet to be completed at home. They were instructed to organize ideas and vocabulary according to semantic categories. During the next meeting, students worked in groups and explained their choices to one another. Students who had not completed the tasks in advance did not sit with a group and finished the worksheet by themselves. By the end of class, each group presented its ideas and explained its choices, and the instructor answered questions about vocabulary and how to approach specific tasks (description, narration, comparisons, etc.). Participants were expected to note ideas during the discussion sessions. The last worksheet contained specific structures that were considered useful to the students according to the task (e.g., list advantages or disadvantages of tourism, list the positive and negative impacts of technology on everyday life, list the characteristics of realist vs. surrealist art).

### *Writing*

The first sample (E 1) was written in the language lab the fourth week of classes for both groups. Participants had a 55-minute time limit to write and proofread, but there was not a required number of words. The last essay (E 4) was also written in the language lab the 13th week of classes. There was a 60-minute time limit to write, proofread, and print or send the essay via e-mail. Both groups had a choice of three topics based on a source text. Group A printed copies and received handwritten feedback on their essays, while Group B dealt exclusively with electronic submissions and feedback.

**Writing Assignments***Group A*

E 1: Source text: “Tienes un e-mail” (‘You have mail’) (Kiddle, Wegmann, & Schreffler, 2002, pp. 129-131). Argue if modern technology has more disadvantages or advantages, mention things you like and dislike about technology, and write a comparison of technology now and technology 50 years ago.

E 4: Source text: “Ladrón de la mente” (‘Thief of Minds’) (Muñoz, 2000). Write an essay from the point of view of one of the characters (three choices).

*Group B*

E 1: Rain forests: “Selvas tropicales: los pulmones del planeta no deben morir” (‘The earth’s lungs should not die’) (Kiddle et al., 2002: pp. 23-26). Write an essay on an ecological problem, its causes, consequences, and possible solutions.

E 4: (1) “El peligro de los piercings en la lengua” (‘Dangers of tongue piercing’) (Saludmanía, 1998). Agree or disagree with a friend who wants to get piercings. Give advice on how to take care of it and how to deal with friends and family members who disapprove; (2) “El uso de animales en los experimentos científicos” (‘The Use of Animals in Scientific Experiments’) (Kiddle et al., p. 116). Argue in favor of or against the use of animals for food, medical research, defense, and so forth; or (3) “La teleadicción” (‘TV Addiction’) (Kiddle et al., pp. 243-245). Argue that addiction to TV-watching is similar to or different from addiction to alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

These essays were evaluated using an analytic scale that students received in advance. All students had an opportunity to submit two corrected versions, but only the last one was compared to the first draft in order to determine the number of successfully corrected errors. The essays were photocopied, and one copy was saved to be scored later in the semester. The essays were evaluated twice over a 4-month period in order to corroborate the validity of the instrument.

For group A, errors were identified according to an adaptation of Lalande’s (1982) ECCO (p. 148), and subsequently students had to record their mistakes on an error frequency chart, also adapted from Lalande’s EASE (p. 149). Errors for Group B were marked electronically, using a code adapted from Ferris and Roberts (2001, p. 169), and students were instructed in the use of the editing tools in Microsoft Word in order to make corrections.

The results in Table 1 show errors made by group and by category in the first draft of Essay 4. Although participants successfully used new words from the source texts, the largest percentage of mistakes fell into the lexical category in both groups. Group A made a higher number of errors, but the average number of words for that

group was 272, compared to Group B, which averaged 204 words. Although students in Group B made more mistakes in noun endings, many of them were agreement errors. Since grammatical gender and number are not salient features in Spanish, students tend to ignore them even when the gender assignment is semantic (e.g., *mujer* ‘woman,’ regardless of the ending, is a feminine noun) and not morphologically determined (e.g., *artista* refers to either a male or a female artist). Group A presented a higher mean of errors in sentence structure, and the majority of these mistakes were omitted prepositions and indirect object pronouns.

**Table 1**  
**Errors: Essay 4, Draft 1—Means/s.d.**

		V	N	A	L	SS	Total
Group A (n = 16)	mean	8.8	5.9	4.0	16.8	9.9	45
	s.d.	2.9	3.9	2.4	7.5	7.2	17
	%	(19.4)	(13.0)	(8.8)	(36.9)	(21.7)	
Group B (n = 19)	mean	4.1	7.2	2.3	9.9	1.61	25
	s.d.	3.4	3.9	2.5	5.9	1.5	12
	%	(17.42)	(26.49)	(10.0)	(39.14)	(6.9)	

*Note:* *V* = all verb errors; *N* = errors in nouns, gender and number agreement, possessives; *A* = articles, demonstratives, adjectives, missing or used incorrectly; *L* = lexical errors, word choice, errors in pronouns and prepositions; *SS* = sentence structure, word order, omitted or unnecessary words.

Table 2 shows errors in the final version of Essay 4 after corrections. Students in Group A greatly reduced the mean of total errors after receiving feedback. Participants in this group, and those in Group B to a lesser extent, had difficulties correcting mistakes in the verb category. Participants in Group A corrected only 56% of them. The two areas that presented more problems were aspect (preterit vs. imperfect) and tense (present vs. past, and future vs. conditional). Although students in Group A had a more detailed correction code, the mean of errors in the verb section is higher than that of Group B. The verb category, for example, has been condensed in these tables for the sake of comparison, but students in Group A received a more direct indication of the type of mistake they had made: *VT* = verb tense; *VA* = verb aspect; *VM* = verb mood; *S-V* = subject-verb agreement; *VF* = verb form. While students in Group B received the same marking for all verb errors (*V* = all errors in verbs), they were able to correct 71% of the mistakes.

**Table 2**  
**Errors: Essay 4, Final Version—Means/s.d.**

		V	N	A	L	SS	Total
Group A (n = 16)	mean	5.0	1.5	0.93	7.0	4.0	18.6
	s.d.	2.9	1.5	1.0	4.2	2.9	8.3
	%	(27.1)	(8.0)	(5.0)	(37.9)	(21.8)	
Group B (n = 19)	mean	2.4	2.4	1.4	4.2	1.1	11
	s.d.	2.4	2.7	1.7	3.2	1.4	7.9
	%	(21.2)	(20.7)	(11.6)	(36.3)	(10.1)	

Table 3 shows the percentage of corrected errors. Students in Group A were more successful at correcting errors in the noun-ending and article categories, but these errors were also coded in a more specific manner: *G* = gender; *N* = number; *F* = word form for noun-endings; *Art* = missing article; *AG* = gender agreement; *AN* = number agreement; *AF* = article form. We need also to consider that students have a 50% probability of successfully correcting gender and number agreement errors. It must be noted that students in Group B were more successful when correcting errors in what Ferris identifies as “untreatable” categories: sentence structure and word choice. For Group A the correction code indicated the following: *L* = wrong word; *Pron.* = error in pronoun; *Prep.* = error in preposition. It is recognized that students in Group B were somewhat more proficient than students in Group A from the onset.

**Table 3**  
**Correctly Identified Errors**

		V	N	A	L	SS	Total
Group A (n = 16)	%	56.3	85.26	96.92	63.33	67.3	68.6
Group B (n = 19)	%	71.38	78.38	64.29	78.05	72.41	75.1

(percentage: number of errors corrected divided by number of errors in each category)

Students’ perceptions about the importance of speaking and writing were further assessed by means of a survey (Appendix B) in which they were asked to rank their language skills. Students ranked speaking as the most important skill, followed by reading, listening, writing, grammar, and comprehension. Students saw writing as instrumental, a way to practice grammar but not to increase proficiency,



rather than expressive. The participants in this study, who rated in the below-average range of overall scores, commented that they would have performed better had they known the grammatical emphasis of the assignments. They believed their lower scores were due to poor grammatical knowledge.

Students also completed a survey on their reading and writing preferences and strategies (Appendix C). Most of those who indicated that they like to read and write also avoided translation when writing and consulted the rules when correcting. These students reported that they spent more time working on assignments than did the others. Regarding their primary concern in writing, 56% of students in Group A and 57% of students in Group B identified grammar as the most important, while organization and content were the least of their concerns (12.5% for Group A, and 10.5% for Group B). These responses may be explained by the emphasis grammar instruction has in lower-division courses. In short, students expected to be corrected in the classroom; otherwise, they felt their language abilities would not improve.

## Discussion

This study set out to answer the following research questions:

1. What effect do different modalities of *error correction* have on students' self-editing abilities?
2. What is the effect of awareness of the *processes* of reading and writing on quality of writing?

With regard to Research Question 1, there was substantial evidence that students in Group B, those who worked with a shorter code (five items), were more successful at correcting errors. Also, the electronic modality allowed them to move within the text from error to error automatically, and it was easier to find corrections. Students in Group A used a 16-item correction code that was deemed rather cumbersome, and it seems the additional information carried on the code (i.e., the kind of error in the verb: tense, aspect, mood, etc.) was in some cases misinterpreted by students. Also, students who worked with hard copies had a more difficult time transferring the corrections to the computer. Several students in Group A (31%) indicated that they retyped the essays every time they had to make corrections, an act that resulted in new mistakes; and in a few cases, students opted to eliminate sentences rather than try to fix them. The findings are consistent with those of Ferris and Roberts (2001) in regard to the treatment of lexical and sentence structure errors. Students in Group A were able to identify correctly 63.3% of lexical errors and 67% of sentence structure errors, while students in Group B correctly identified 78% of lexical and 72% of sentence structure errors. Students in both groups showed concerns about grammatical accuracy in writing and expected to have their errors marked. Students in Group A mentioned that the lack of grammar correction in their journal entries was as frustrating as the number of errors they had to correct in their essays.

While the debate regarding effectiveness of feedback continues, it is possible that students are motivated by the error correction and that the effects will become evident over time (Ferris, 2004). The results also reveal that students show improvement from the first draft to the final version of the same essay and little improvement between first drafts of first and last essays; thus it is possible that feedback in this case has not had a long-lasting effect on writing. Nonetheless, students in both groups demonstrated an increased ability to successfully identify errors. As Casanave (2004) indicates, it is important that instructors define improvement for students and help them understand that the feedback is aimed at specific areas of improvement. The perceptions of students in Group A regarding the importance of grammatical accuracy were reinforced by the correction code that emphasized what students did wrong. This outcome was not intended by the researcher and was partially rectified in the treatment of Group B.

Research Question 2 looks at the effects of awareness of reading and writing processes. Although both groups engaged in prewriting activities, the quality of their essays differed in content, organization, and completion. Students in Group A had brainstorming and planning sessions, the objectives of which were to elicit useful vocabulary and to organize content. Nevertheless, they had trouble staying on task and often changed the function of the essay to one that seemed more comfortable for their proficiency level (i.e., description instead of narration, exposition instead of argumentation). Group B worked with brainstorming and planning as well, but the focus of the planning sessions was ideas and semantic grouping of vocabulary and concepts. This group also worked on discussing effective ways to describe, narrate, compare, and hypothesize, and the attention was drawn away from grammatical accuracy. Students who understood writing as a process and spent more time revising and editing were more successful at correctly identifying their errors. The use of electronic feedback coincides with Casanave's (2004) observation that the instructor's role can resemble the work of a professional editor more than that of a teacher, giving students a chance to reflect on their own meanings rather than adjusting to what the teacher thinks they mean. The results of this study suggest that instructors need to find appropriate means to help students depart from translation to develop both proficiency and accuracy.

## **Conclusions**

The findings of this study are similar to those of Chandler (2003) and Ferris and Roberts (2001) in the use of the corrections codes. The samples reveal that a longer, more detailed code lends itself to possible incorrect markings from the instructor. Also, the instructor spent more time marking the essays because the code had to be consulted regularly in order to maintain uniformity. Handwritten corrections also resulted in several mistakes that were not marked in the first drafts, and these missed errors were not considered in the final tally. The simplified code was more efficient to use and clearer for the students. The researcher was aware of "the tenuous connections between their [the teachers'] labor-intensive work and real improvement in their students' writing" (Casanave, 2004, p. 95).

Although students' preoccupations with grammatical accuracy in Group A possibly reflect a shortcoming of the correction code and the error chart, it is plausible that there is a need to address salient grammatical features in the classroom as a means of developing problem-solving techniques. Ferris (2004) recommends addressing grammatical problems on an as-needed basis and combining this grammar review with other aspects of error treatment, like feedback. She also advocates the use of an error chart, which can help students to become aware of their weaknesses. In this study the use of error charts only seemed to exacerbate the feelings of students who were already frustrated. A possible solution for the future may be the use of a simplified error chart that does not overwhelm students and helps them identify specific problem areas. Instead of focusing students' attention on non-critical errors, such as gender agreement, instructors have to devise strategies that help students achieve better understanding of all the factors that are involved in FL writing. We must acknowledge that many instructors have little tolerance for mistakes in gender agreement or spelling, since they are so common and thus interfere with fluency, but a better understanding of critical versus non-critical mistakes among instructors may result in a better treatment of errors in writing.

Certainly the issue of error correction in FL writing is far from resolved. It is clear that more research needs to be undertaken in this area. With respect to foreign language teaching, researchers and instructors have to take into consideration the fact that students in intermediate courses may lack the motivation and focus of ESL students. Writing in the foreign language is often done only in the classroom, while ESL students may find numerous occasions for writing in English, such as academic or professional uses. In addition, research in FL writing has yet to look into other issues, for instance, the purposes of FL writing. Future research will have to follow Ferris's (2004) suggestions of conducting longitudinal studies to document the long-term effects of error feedback. Keen observation of student behavior as well as the effects of treatment in the classroom must guide instruction and research in FL writing when improvement is to be taken into account.

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**Appendix A**  
**ECCO, EASE, and SC (Ferris)**

ECCO/EASE	Essay1/rewrite	Essay 2/rewrite
Verbs (S-V agreement)		
Aspect (A)		
Mood (M)		
Auxiliary verbs (Aux)		
Form (VF)		
Gender (G)		
Number (N)		
Form (F)		
Article (agreement/form)		
Lexical error (L)		
Pronoun (omitted/incorrect)		
Preposition (Pre)		
Word order (WO)		
Idiomatic Expression (EX)		
Spelling (Sp)		
Total		

**Short Code (Ferris)**

- V all verb errors, tense, mood, aspect, s-v agreement  
 N noun-endings, gender and number  
 A articles or other determiners, incorrectly used or omitted  
 L lexical errors, nouns, pronouns, and prepositions  
 ES sentence structure, word order, idiomatic expressions, unnecessary words

**Appendix B**  
**Language Skills Ranked by Students N = 35**

	Least important (%)	Somewhat important (%)	Most important (%)	N/A (%)
Reading	5.7	11.4	80.0	2.8
Writing	20.0	22.8	42.8	14.1
Listening	2.8	25.7	68.5	2.8
Comprehension	28.5	22.8	28.5	20.1
Speaking	2.8	11.4	82.8	2.8
Grammar	5.7	34.2	51.4	8.5

**Appendix C**  
**Writing and Reading perceptions (N= 35)**

	Group A (n = 16)	Group B (n = 19)
1. Do you like to write?	(%)	(%)
yes	68.8	68.4
no	31.3	26.3
2. Do you consider yourself a good writer?		
yes	31.3	57.9
no	68.6	42.1
3. What is your primary concern when writing?		
vocabulary and grammar	56.2	57.9
organization and content	12.5	10.5
meaning	31.3	31.6
4. How do you approach writing in a foreign language?		
start in English and translate	75	47.4
start in Spanish and avoid translation	25	52.6
5. How do you approach composition corrections?		
consult rules	25	42.1
intuition	75	57.9
6. Do you like to read?		
yes	75	63.2
no	25	36.8
7. What do you do when you do not know the meaning of a word?		
consult a dictionary	56.2	47.4
ignore it	25	36.8
try to deduce meaning from context	18.8	15.8





# 5

## Using Computer Translation Websites to Further the Objectives of the *Foreign Language Standards*

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### Abstract

*Inexperienced students of foreign languages often equate learning a language with translation. Armed with a bilingual dictionary, students convert their sophisticated English thoughts into tortured German, French, or Spanish. The widespread use of computer translation Web sites has only compounded this problem. Students' reliance on translation as a primary strategy for foreign language learning reveals some fundamental misconceptions about language and translation. Standard 4.1 of the Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century (1999) states that comparisons of the target and native languages can help students better understand the language learning process and the limitations of translation. Ironically, computer translation Web sites can serve as a vehicle to accomplish these objectives. This article discusses attitudes towards computer translation and provides a brief history of the field. Examples of the limitations of computer translation programs are given. Finally, several classroom activities that ask students to use computer translation Web sites to solve specific language problems common to first-year students of the most commonly taught languages in the United States are provided.*

The Comparison Standard of the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century* (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 1999) states that a key objective for students' study of foreign languages is to develop "a greater understanding of their own language and culture and of language and culture in the broadest sense" (p. 57). Most beginning foreign language students have at best a superficial understanding of their own language and even less understanding of the second-language (L2) learning process. "Students often come to the study of another language with the assumptions that all languages are like their own" (National Standards, p. 57). Armed with these assumptions, inexperienced students often equate learning another language with simply translating the language they know to the one they do not know. Novice learners, then, consider translation to be an important strategy in learning a foreign language, and they

greatly value resources that facilitate this process. Recently, Web-based translation sites such as <[www.babelfish.com](http://www.babelfish.com)> and <[www.freetranslation.com](http://www.freetranslation.com)> have attracted foreign language students with the promise of a technological shortcut to the drudgery of memorizing vocabulary and applying grammatical rules.

This article will discuss the pedagogical issues that computer translation raises. Included in this discussion will be (1) the attitudes of foreign language students towards computer translation, (2) history of the development of computerized translation, (3) the limitations of computer translation programs, and (4) examples of classroom activities using computer translation Web sites that help develop insights into students' first and second languages.

### **Computer Translation and the Foreign Language Student**

Bilingual dictionaries, word glosses, marginal notes, and bilingual word lists are common components of foreign language textbooks and classes, and research has given support to the use of these strategies. For example, Davis (1989) found positive effects of marginal glossing for L2 reading, and Hulstijn, Hollander, and Greidanus (1996) found that incidental vocabulary learning was facilitated by bilingual dictionary use.

Over the last decade, computers have been added to the list of essential instructional materials for teaching foreign languages. Acronyms such as CALL (Computer-Assisted Language Learning) and CAI (Computer-Assisted Instruction) are commonly found in professional literature. Nutta et al. (2002) cite numerous positive effects from elementary students' use of computers, including more tolerance of ambiguous information, improvement in reading, and the completion of more complex tasks. The use of computers has been shown to be effective in the teaching of culture (Cononelos & Oliva, 1993), speaking and writing (Beauvois, 1997), listening (Joiner, 1997), and reading (Busch, 2003).

Recently, translation software and Web-based translation programs have become widely available. These materials are accompanied by convincing testimonials detailing the ease with which one can convert text in English into a variety of other languages. For example, the following ad for <[www.freetranslation.com](http://www.freetranslation.com)> promises accuracy and convenience in translating English to a variety of languages:

FreeTranslation is one of the most popular websites of its kind, with in excess of 1.5 million visitors per week. FreeTranslation allows users to obtain free translations of both text and web pages. The translation is generated by a computer, displayed instantly and the user is dynamically shown the cost of having the same text professionally translated. . . . (FreeTranslation, 2004)

For the beginning student who views learning a foreign language as fundamentally an issue of translation, such an advertisement seems to be an answer to a prayer. Teachers almost universally condemn the use of computer translation programs as high-tech plagiarism. However, many students who are, as a rule, more technologically savvy than their teachers feel that they are being unjustly restricted

from using the most up-to-date resources. What is the difference, they ask, between using a computer translation site in a foreign language class and using a calculator in a math class? Is not computer translation a natural evolution of accepted learning aids such as bilingual dictionaries and word glosses? Some members of the general public share such questions:

Until well within living memory the making of mathematical tables, ephemerides, and the like was done by human beings using mechanical calculating machines to perform millions of repetitive arithmetic operations—mental drudgery on a staggering scale, the equivalent of coal-mining with a pick and a shovel. Nowadays, any child can churn out those tables in minutes on a home computer. Before long, language learning may seem as antique and unnecessary a skill as the computation of ten-figure logarithms by hand. (Derbyshire, 2000)

Advances in technology frequently create new problems while solving old ones. Like many controversial topics arising from technological innovation, students' use of computer translation Web sites will undoubtedly challenge foreign language teachers for some time to come. Rather than issue summary prohibitions against their use, however, foreign language teachers can use computer translation sites as a point of departure to demonstrate the limitations of translation and deepen the students' understanding of their first and second languages. By directly confronting the issue of translation, foreign language teachers can challenge its viability as an effective strategy as well as advance the objectives of Standard 4.1 of the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning*.

### **A Brief History of Computer Translation**

Efforts to develop a machine translator span more than 70 years. In 1933, France awarded a patent for a “mechanical brain” that could translate words and phrases from one language to another (Bueno, 1993). Sixteen years later the University of Washington began work on a translation computer to respond to the Cold War demand for translations from Russian to English (Luton, 2003). Two professional meetings in the 1950s at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Georgetown University were devoted entirely to the subject of machine translation (Schairer, 1996). A report from the Georgetown meeting, typical of the optimistic tone of the time, stated that machine translation of standard scientific information required no more post-editing than standard human translation (Schairer). Funded by grants from the military and other government agencies in the 1950s and early 1960s, the quest for an effective translation computer seemed within reach:

Long before the spreadsheet program or desktop publishing was even dreamed of, scientists seized on automated translation as the technology of the future. The notion was that, within a few years, a computer-fed Russian scientific journal would spew out English translations automatically. (Fong, 1989)

This early optimism, however, was premature. Budiansky (1998) reports a story from the early 1960s that reflects the emerging skepticism that surrounded the field of computer translation.

The CIA had built [a computer] to translate between English and Russian: to test the machine, the programmers decided to have it translate a phrase into Russian and then translate the result back into English, to see if they'd get the same words they started with. The director of the CIA was invited to do the honors; the programmers all gathered expectantly around the console to watch as the director typed in the test words: "Out of sight, out of mind." The computer silently ground through its calculations. Hours passed. Then, suddenly, magnetic tapes whirred, lights blinked, and a printer clattered out the result: "Invisible insanity." (Budiansky, 1998, p. 81)

Repeated, real-life failures prompted a 1966 recommendation by the Automatic Language Processing Advisory Committee of the National Science Foundation that funding be suspended for all computer translation projects (Fong, 1989). By the 1980s the head of the University of Southern California Information Services Institute declared the field dead (Stone, 1991).

The primary reason for the failure of these early efforts resulted from oversimplified comparisons to the code-breaking machines used during World War II. Like their code-breaking predecessors, the early computer translators were direct systems that looked up each word or phrase in the target language and attempted to make a substitution in the foreign language (Budiansky, 1998). The problem with this strategy is that effective language translation requires a great deal more than simple word-for-word substitution. Referring to idiomatic speech that resists word-for-word translation, Ian Simpson, president of a computer translation company, admits, "You are always going to have problems with that" (Belsie, 1998, p. 12).

However, the demand for a translation computer continued unabated and led to modifications of the direct system. Pinker (1994) describes a computer program called ELIZA that looked up a few key words in the input line and retrieved a pre-programmed response to mimic a crude conversation. Borrowing from psychologist Carl Rogers's philosophy of recasting patients' statements for them to hear and reflect on, a conversation with ELIZA might look like this:

User: I have been rather depressed lately.

Computer: Are you depressed often?

User: Yes, almost all the time.

Computer: Why do you say "yes" almost all the time?

User: Right now I feel like I could cry.

Computer: Is it because right now you feel like you could cry that you came to me? (Pinker, 1994, pp. 194-195).

Like the canned platitudes found in astrological forecasts and Chinese fortune cookies, such responses fall far short of good psychotherapy. Similarly, computer translation programs have generally proven inadequate to the task of translating natural, unedited language. A 1979 report by a professional translator stated that machine translation “was slower, less accurate, and twice as expensive as human translation despite the programmer’s best efforts” (Schairer, 1996). A chapter on computer translation from the *A Practical Guide for Translators* (Samuelsson-Brown, 1998) reaches a similar conclusion:

Development has been slow since the first serious attempts at machine translation were made 50 years ago. The facility is becoming more of a viable option but still needs a skilled translator or language editor to make the result acceptable. . . . It is a misconception held by some unenlightened clients that all the translator needs to do is load the electronic file containing the source text into the computer and wait for the finished translation to be produced automatically. (pp. 69-70)

Such “automatic” translations bring to mind Goethe’s comment about mathematicians: “Mathematicians are like Frenchmen: whatever you say to them, they translate into their own language, and forthwith it is something completely different.” (<[www.quotationspage.com](http://www.quotationspage.com)>)

The result of unedited computer translation programs is often “completely different” from the original. In a study of translations from English to Spanish produced by three computer programs, native and near native speakers of Spanish rated the translations more incorrect than correct, and more incomprehensible than comprehensible (Schairer, 1996). The president of a computer translation software company summarized the current limitations of the field: “No product on the market today will let you translate a document with enough accuracy that you would feel comfortable sending it to a client without a final edit by a human translator” (Software Speaks User’s Language, 1998, p. 20).

Why has it proven so difficult to develop effective computer translation programs? One problem is syntax or word order that varies widely between languages. Even in languages that are fairly similar to English, such as French and Spanish, adjectives are usually placed after the noun; and pronoun objects are placed before the verb. In Japanese this rearrangement rate is almost 100% (Budiansky, 1998).

Vocabulary poses other challenges. In order to make effective substitutions, the computer memory must hold every inflected form of every verb and every plural of every noun (Budiansky, 1998). Another challenge related to vocabulary involves idioms and words that have double meanings. The ambiguity of these forms of language creates unintended meanings, as the following newspaper headlines demonstrate: “Stud Tires Out”; “Iraqi Head Seeks Arms”; and “Child’s Stool Great for Use in the Garden” (Pinker, 1994, p. 79).

The history of international marketing is filled with similar examples of slogans rendered laughable by the mistranslation of idioms, such as the following:

1. The American Dairy Association's slogan "Got milk" was rendered in Spanish as "Are You Lactating?"
2. The Pepsi slogan "Pepsi Brings Life" was rendered into Chinese as a promise that Pepsi will bring ancestors back from the dead.
3. In Italy, "Schweppes Tonic Water" was translated as "Schweppes Toilet Water." <[www.jokes.com](http://www.jokes.com)>

Syntax, vocabulary, and idiomatic phrases all complicate the computer translation process enormously. Through the study of a foreign language, students come to understand the complexity of their first language and the challenge of learning another one. Again, Goethe provides an appropriate quote: "A man who does not know foreign languages is ignorant of his own" <[www.quoteworld.org](http://www.quoteworld.org)>.

#### **Standard 4.1: Developing Insight into the Nature of Language**

The Comparison Standard of the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century* (National Standards, 1999) celebrates the insight that learning another language provides to every learner. "This goal is explicit acknowledgement that study of a second or foreign language and its culture contributes in an important way to the education and development of every learner" (Fantini, 1999, p. 167). However, Gettys (2003) points out that there has been a lack of research into the implementation of this standard because it challenges conventional thinking about the goals and objectives of foreign language instruction. Specifically, Standard 4.1 proposes a significant role for the use of first language (L1) in second language instruction.

The use of the students' L1 in the teaching of foreign languages has fallen into disfavor over the last 30 years. Communicative language teaching methodology goes to great lengths to avoid the use of L1. For example, Total Physical Response links words and expressions to physical actions performed by the teacher and students, whereas the Silent Way uses colored rods to represent the foreign language. However, several recent studies have found that limited L1 use has certain benefits in the teaching of foreign languages (Anton & Dicamilla, 1999; Cook, 1996; Fantini, 1999; Gettys, 2003; Kecskes & Papp, 2000). Although beginning students constantly refer to their first language while studying a foreign language, their knowledge is "a mile wide and an inch deep." "Monolingual speakers are rarely consciously aware of their own language unless they are made to think about it in some way" (Gettys, 2003, p. 192). Web-based translation sites provide a convenient point of departure for activities that make students more aware of their first and second languages and the relationship between the two. The following three activities use the Web-based translation site <[www.freetranslation.com](http://www.freetranslation.com)>. All are in Spanish and are appropriate for a first-year high school or first-semester university class.

### Activity One: Cognates

*Cognates* are words from two different languages that are related in spelling and meaning through a common etymology. Cognates can be classified as *exact* (“piano”), *direct* (“familia,” “vocabulario”) and *indirect* (“agua,” related to the English word “aquarium”) (Levy & Nassi, 1996, p. 325). After introducing the concept of cognates with examples and exercises from each of the three categories, the teacher provides the students with the following text:

Hola. Mi nombre es Susanita. Soy extrovertida y optimista. Soy estudiante y mis clases son interesantes y fascinantes. Mi profesora de español es la señora Carro. La señora Carro es muy inteligente. Mi color favorite es negro. Mi mes favorito es septiembre. Mi comida favorita es pizza. (Zayas-Bazán & Bacon, 2004, p. 37)

The students would first attempt to translate the passage into English on their own. Next they would enter the passage into <[www.freetranslation.com](http://www.freetranslation.com)> and compare their version with the following computer translation:

Hello. My name is Susanita. I am extrovertida and optimistic. I am student and my classes are interesting and fascinantes. My teacher of Spaniard is the lady Car. The lady Car is very intelligent. My color favorite is black. My favorite month is September. My favorite food is pizza.

Many students will produce English translations superior to that generated by the Web site. An analysis of the students’ work and the computer translation reveals many of the problem areas of computer translation in the areas of syntax and vocabulary. For example, the computer left untranslated the adjective “extrovertida” (extroverted), indicating a limited corpus of vocabulary items. It translated the adjective “interesante” correctly but left “fascinante” in the original Spanish. This error was probably due to the distant location of the second adjective relative to the noun it was modifying. Similarly, the computer mistranslated “de español” as “of Spaniard,” mistaking the nationality for the language. The professor’s last name was also mistranslated because of a dual meaning of the common Spanish word for “car,” “cart,” or “wagon” and the proper noun “Carro.” By pointing out these and other inconsistencies, the teacher can demonstrate to students that cognates are generally a reliable guide for both computers and humans. What makes the human superior in the processing of this text is the ability to factor in context.

### Activity Two: Idioms

An *idiom*, according to *The American Heritage College Dictionary* (1993), is “a speech form or an expression of a given language that is peculiar to itself grammatically or cannot be understood from the individual meanings of its elements” (p. 674). Some common examples of idioms in English are “to cost an arm and a leg,” “to live from hand to mouth,” and “to rain cats and dogs.” According to

Cooper (1998), idioms are common in spoken discourse, occurring at a rate of approximately three per minute. Given their frequency in spoken and written discourse, idioms should be taught as part of foreign language instruction. Web-based translation sites can serve as a springboard for a discussion of idiomatic usage, as well as demonstrate the limitations of computer translation in this area of language.

Burton (2003) points out that “It’s an eye-opening experience to the students to realize suddenly that some of the expressions s/he takes for granted are, in fact, idioms that have no parallel expression in the other language” (p. 320). The reason for the lack of correspondence between idioms in different languages is that idioms are expressions whose meaning is more figurative than literal and more metaphorical than concrete. Thus, as a first step in a lesson on idioms the teacher might ask the students to rate the following idioms as either literal or figurative in meaning:

- “Better late than never.” (more or less literal, dealing with the value of time and punctuality)
- “An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.” (somewhat literal, dealing with the desire for revenge)
- “Don’t look a gift horse in the mouth.” (more figurative, dealing with the value of gratitude)
- “A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.” (more figurative, dealing with not giving up what you have for the promise of something better)
- “You reap what you sow.” (more figurative, dealing with receiving your just rewards)

The second activity involves comparisons of idioms in English with closely related idioms in the target language. Cooper (1998) recommends initially focusing on idioms that are similar in the two languages. Thus, the teacher asks the students to match the following English idioms with their target language equivalents. Key words can be provided prior to the exercise, or the students can use bilingual dictionaries.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Better late than never.
- \_\_\_\_\_ An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Don’t look a gift horse in the mouth.
- \_\_\_\_\_ A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.
- \_\_\_\_\_ You reap what you sow.

- a. A caballo regalado no se le miran los dientes.
- b. Más vale tarde que nunca.
- c. Quien bien siembra, bien recoge.
- d. Ojo por ojo, diente por diente.
- e. Pájaro en la mano vale cien volando.



After the teacher reviews the matched answers, the students are instructed to enter the five English idioms into < [www.freetranslation.com](http://www.freetranslation.com)> and compare the computer-translated versions with the correct Spanish equivalents. The resulting translations are as follows:

Better late than never.	Más vale tarde que nunca.
An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.	Un ojo para un ojo, un diente para un diente.
Don't look a gift horse in the mouth.	No mire un caballo de obsequio en la boca.
A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush	Un pájaro en la mano vale dos en el arbusto.
You reap what you sow.	Usted cosecha lo que Usted siembra.

An analysis of these translations reveals that the more figurative the meaning of the idiom, the less accurate the computer translation. The teacher can lead a discussion focusing on why this is true and then repeat the three-step procedure with additional idioms.

### Activity Three: Composition Error Correction

Although no clear consensus has emerged as to the best method of corrective feedback in second language acquisition, teachers spend a great deal of time correcting student errors. Chaudron (1988) states that one of the primary roles of language teachers is to provide corrective feedback to student production. In the absence of clear guidelines for error correction, many of the methods used by teachers confuse students more than guide them. One method of error correction that does show promise is isolating the error and repeating it to the student in conjunction with corrective feedback (Lyster, 1998). By using computer translation Web sites, students can isolate their errors in written compositions. Teachers can use the translations to pinpoint errors and to propose corrections.

After students have finished a first draft of a composition, the teacher instructs them to enter the text of the composition in <[www.freetranslation.com](http://www.freetranslation.com)> and translate from Spanish to English. An example of a composition in which a first-year student describes her family is as follows:

Mi madre es 41 años de viejo. Ella tiene gusto de entrenar deportes y me mira jugarlos. Mi pequeño hermano es 7 años de viejo. El es un cabrito muy elegante y tiene gusto de leer los libros mucho. Mi padre magnífico es 68 años de viejo. El tiene gusto cuenta nos viejas historias y a pesca del reloj en la televisión.

The resulting translation of this composition immediately indicates to the student that there are a number of problems that need to be corrected:

My mother is 41 years *of old*. She *has flavor* to coach sports and *looks* me to play them. My small brother is 7 years *of old*. *The is a cabrito* very *elegant* and *has flavor* to read the books a lot. My *magnificent* father is 68 years of old. *The has flavor account* us old *histories* and to fishing *of the clock* in the television.

The italicized words and phrases seem as awkward or incorrect in English as they are in the original Spanish. The computer translation gives the student a sense of what he or she “sounds like” in the foreign language. The fact that the English translation was based on the student’s own words and produced by an international translation Web site gives the activity a certain degree of authority and impartiality.

## Conclusion

The widespread availability of computer translation Web sites offers both a challenge and an opportunity to foreign language teachers. On the one hand, students may view computer translation as a convenient way to avoid the headaches of memorizing vocabulary and applying grammatical rules. Teachers who realize the limitations of computer translation have an opportunity to provide their students with a critique of translation in general and of computer translation in particular. An effective means to accomplish this goal is to apply computer translation Web sites to specific language problems common to first-year students, such as idiomatic usage and composition errors. In so doing, teachers will address the problem of students’ over-reliance on translation and their fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of language itself. Controlled use of computer translation helps students deepen their knowledge of their first language and realize the fundamental differences between languages, both goals of Standard 4.1 of the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning*. As Gettys (2003) points out, “By comparing two linguistic systems, students gain awareness of the nature of language itself—one of the most fascinating and important rewards of language learning” (p. 196).

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# 6

## Rebuilding a Dying Foreign Language Education Program

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### Abstract

*Handed an undergraduate foreign language education program that was dying and in danger of being eliminated from the curriculum of the College of Education at the University of Central Florida, the author was directed to rebuild it. The author shares the results of formative evaluation of the program and steps taken to effect program enhancement. The areas of revision were all-encompassing: revamping the program to reflect current teacher certification requirements, modifying course content to address current foreign language trends and research, changing the clinical experience to include K-8 levels, initiating program and course offering advertisement, improving the advisement of foreign language education majors, and addressing the needs of inservice teachers.*

### Background

“Rebuild this program” was my directive, as I assumed my new position as foreign language education program coordinator at the University of Central Florida. The foreign language education program, a marriage of courses from the foreign language department within the College of Arts and Sciences and the foreign language education program housed in the College of Education, was in danger of being eliminated from the College of Education. The program no longer satisfied the needs of foreign language education majors. Program requirements no longer reflected state certification requirements. Methods courses did not call for student application of current foreign language pedagogy. There was little evidence of collaboration between the foreign language education program and other entities contributing to the program. Input from foreign language educators at all levels of instruction appeared to be lacking. Unable to find courses that were listed as program requirements, students were unable to graduate within the usual 4 years of an undergraduate teacher education program. Consequently, the number of foreign language education majors over the years was dwindling, rendering the program inefficient and ineffective. A mere five students comprised the foreign language education program when leadership of the program changed.

Program evaluation was necessary before significant changes could be made. Such evaluation can assume several forms: (a) scientific, (b) systematic, (c) summative and (d) formative. *Scientific evaluation* occurs when experimental methods are utilized to assess the effects of a particular method or program approach and its consequences; variables are manipulated and results are analyzed. *Systematic evaluation*, which spans program inception to its end, entails such processes as identification of goals and objectives for second language instruction; selection of points in the curriculum for assessment; compilation of student demographics; determination of student and faculty satisfaction via focus groups, exit interviews, and surveys; and preparation of comprehensive administrative reports (Birchbichler, Kawamura, Dassier, & Costner, 1999).

*Summative evaluation*, which occurs at the end of a program, is conducted for the purpose of determining the extent to which the program successfully brings about the attainment of objectives in an efficient and effective manner (Brown, 1995). In contrast, *formative evaluation* is used to judge the effectiveness of an existing program. According to Dassier and Powell (2001):

The purpose of a formative evaluation is . . . (a) to help institute changes in a program to better attain curricular objectives, (b) to review these objectives, if necessary (particularly useful if efforts are being made to realign a program with the new orientation proposed by the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning* [National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 1999]), and many times (c) to write curricular objectives, if none were proposed and stated before the evaluation. (p. 96)

Given that an ongoing program was being evaluated, formative evaluation was most appropriately selected as the mode of evaluation. "A formative evaluation . . . offers existing programs a means of investigating themselves to obtain information for program enhancement" (Patton, 1990). This process would consist of the "systematic collection and analysis of all relevant information necessary to promote the improvement of a curriculum and to assess its effectiveness within the context of the particular institutions involved" (Brown, 1989, p. 223). Formative evaluation of the program entailed the collection of data on such factors as student enrollment, currency of content within methods courses, success of students during their clinical experiences, collaborative efforts between foreign language and foreign language education faculty, satisfaction of teacher licensure requirements by the program curriculum, articulation of language courses, alignment of the program with state and national standards, and passing scores of students on the Florida Teacher Certification Exam.

### **Conducting County Meetings with Service Area School Districts**

Review of the literature indicates an increase in university/school district partnerships as a reaction to criticism in the 1990s that university teacher certification programs did not satisfactorily prepare future teachers to meet the increasing demands of today's educational profession. Consequently, the last decade has seen a

growing number of professional development schools, K-16 personnel curricular involvement in pre-service teacher education, and field experiences as requisites in foundation courses (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Fullan, 1991; Goodlad, 1990).

Given the impetus for partnerships in curricular reform, I contacted the county-level foreign language curriculum coordinators in the area and scheduled meetings to obtain input from them and their foreign language teachers concerning our teacher preparation program. It was my goal to establish a positive relationship between the schools and the university, making the foreign language education program a collaborative effort of foreign language educators at all levels of instruction. During these meetings, teachers and coordinators discussed what they believed to be characteristics of a successful language teacher. They expressed Schulz's (2000) concerns regarding teacher education programs: (a) lack of sufficient student teacher proficiency in the language to be able to successfully teach it and (b) lack of collegiality and collaboration between the foreign language department and foreign language education program. They also recommended that the clinical experience placements of student teachers, given that state foreign language certification is K-12, encompass the elementary, middle, and high school levels. Foreign language education students had typically been placed only at the high school level, largely because of the dearth of language programs at the elementary and middle school levels, but also because of the lack of program initiative in establishing clinical experiences at those levels.

The teachers also emphasized the need for student reflection, the "active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends" (Dewey, 1933, p. 9). "A reflective approach views teacher candidates as active agents of their learning-to-teach processes and provides the groundwork for continuous self-development" (Vélez-Rendón, 2002, p. 463). Research has found that engaging in reflective practice significantly affects one's growth in teacher education programs (Antonek, McCormick, & Donato, 1997; Kwo, 1996; Mok, 1994). Antonek et al. (1997) found that reflective practice helped student teachers become increasingly adept in gleaning meaning from their experiences as their educational philosophies developed.

Finally, the importance of providing numerous opportunities for collaboration, a finding substantiated by the literature (Knezevic & Scholl, 1996; Tedick & Walker, 1994; Vélez-Rendón, 2002), was also expressed. Oftentimes, the foreign language education major is the sole student teacher at a school, either within the foreign language department or across disciplines. The intern frequently feels isolated. Opportunities to collaborate with other student teachers, other language teachers, and other professionals within the field of foreign language "can lead to enriched learning and improved instruction" (Knezevic & Scholl, 1996, p. 95). According to Vélez-Rendón, collaboration addresses "the social nature of learning and the increasing isolation in which teachers often find themselves" (2002, p. 461). Student teachers need other language educators with whom they can network, who can serve as mentors, and from whom they can learn additional pedagogy and content.

### **Developing Inter-University Partnerships**

After determining district needs, I contacted coordinators of foreign language education programs at other universities. Their program curricula provided insight concerning the nature of their teacher preparation. Once a program was found that resembled what I had envisioned for my university, I met with the chairperson of the department housing that program. Coincidentally, this faculty member was employed at the state university closest to the University of Central Florida. Because of this proximity, students who resided halfway between both universities would at times take at the sister university a course not offered by their “home” university during a particular semester. Since the foreign language education programs at the sister university and ultimately at my university would greatly resemble each other, a partnership was established between the programs: foreign language education faculty at both universities would inform each other of their course offerings and share that information when advising students. This partnership benefited both sets of faculty and students by enhancing faculty collegiality between the universities and facilitating students’ completion of program requirements.

### **The Foreign Language Education Advisory Council**

Prior to making programmatic changes based on feedback elicited from the foreign language educators at the school district meetings, it was imperative that as much data as possible be collected from additional stakeholders in the foreign language education program. Letters of invitation to serve on a foreign language education advisory council were sent to public and private school foreign language teachers and bilingual elementary teachers who informally teach a second language to their charges, as well as to principals, curriculum coordinators, University of Central Florida faculty from the foreign language department, and the State Department of Education foreign language representative. To address the need for collaborative opportunities, undergraduate foreign language education majors were also invited to serve on the council. The council boasted a membership of 42 highly effective, goal-directed individuals at all levels of instruction.

The committee held meetings twice a year at various central Florida school districts to accommodate all of the members. Council members worked together in addressing some of the following topics: enhancement of student teacher preparation, development of graduate level foreign language education programs at the University of Central Florida, development of seminars to meet the needs of practicing teachers, and any other issues of interest to foreign language educators.

One of the first charges of the council was to critically analyze the foreign language education program and evaluate it for effectiveness in teacher preparation. Council members were split into six work groups, the membership of which had been meticulously selected, according to the following criteria: Each group consisted of a county-level foreign language representative, a principal, a foreign language teacher from the high school, middle school, and elementary school levels, a professor from the University of Central Florida foreign language department,



and an undergraduate foreign language education major. The task for each group was to create the ideal foreign language education program. Following this exercise, each group shared its ideas with the entire council. Although the council represented a much broader base of personnel than had the county meetings held several months prior to the inception of the council, it was no surprise that the council's suggestions mirrored those expressed by the county meeting participants: (a) additional opportunities for student teachers to use the language so that linguistic proficiency is enhanced; (b) improved collaboration between the foreign language education program and the foreign language department at the university level; (c) increased opportunities for collaboration for both preservice and inservice foreign language educators at all levels of instruction; (d) student opportunities for practical application of current foreign language pedagogy; (e) enhanced student reflection; and (f) the inclusion of K-8 student teaching placements. Inservice teachers also called for additional professional development opportunities to address their own needs: graduate programs in foreign language education, certification methods courses offered during the summer to accommodate their schedules, and workshops in content and strategies.

### **Revising the Undergraduate Foreign Language Education Program**

Armed with data collected from the county and the Foreign Language Education Advisory Council meetings, I began the year-long process of revising the undergraduate foreign language education program. Cross-referencing the state certification requirements with the program requirements led to the elimination of several courses no longer required for certification. In addition, there were several College of Arts and Sciences courses included in the program that were no longer being offered or were being offered intermittently, a situation that lengthened a student's tenure at the university. These courses were eliminated from the foreign language education program, and, when necessary, suggestions were solicited of alternative courses that could serve as viable replacements within the program.

This process entailed extensive cooperative efforts from faculty in both colleges, while ensuring that state requirements would still be satisfied. Faculty exercised care in addressing the Florida Accomplished Practices, areas of competency adopted by the Florida Education Standards Commission (1999). The Educator Accomplished Practices were developed as a set of teaching competencies with key indicators of behavior for each identified competency. These teaching skills reflect high expectations and provide a model of continuous improvement for educators from preprofessional to the accomplished practice level. The Educator Accomplished Practices have been correlated with the School Improvement and Accountability Goals and Standards, the Sunshine State Standards, the Florida Minimum Competencies for Professional Certification (Section 231.17, F.S.), the Teacher Certification Examination (Essential Teaching Competencies), Performance Assessment Criteria (Section 231.29(3), F.S.), and the Standards for Competent Professional Performance (State Board Rule 6B-5, Florida Department of Education, 1998; *University of Central Florida professional portfolio*

*information*, 2002). The practices were recommended to and approved by the Florida legislature. Alignment of the programmatic goals and objectives with the Accomplished Practices resulted in a foreign language education program that accurately satisfied the state requirements for foreign language K-12 certification in the State of Florida.

To address the issue of a more broad-based clinical experience encompassing both elementary and secondary placements, the county-level foreign language representatives were contacted for a list of elementary and middle schools with foreign language programs in their counties. Once this database was secured, all schools meeting the criteria were contacted to determine their interest in a junior internship (Internship I) placement of a foreign language student teacher. Since most foreign language education graduates obtained employment at the high school because of the substantially larger number of foreign language programs at that level, student teachers tended to be placed at a high school for Internship II. This 14-week senior internship was generally completed during the student's final semester at the university and required the student to completely assume the role of the classroom teacher after 3 weeks of phasing-in responsibility for additional classes. Internship I, on the other hand, entailed two full days per week for 14 weeks under the supervision of a classroom teacher trained in clinical supervision. The responsibilities of the Internship I pre-service teacher were much less weighty than those of the Internship II student teacher and consisted primarily of becoming familiar with the panorama of factors that compose the school scene. During this placement, the responsibility for the class remained with the supervising teacher.

Several changes were made to Internship I and its prerequisites. Previously consisting of secondary-level placements, Internship I was revised to include placements at the middle and elementary levels to accommodate new partnerships that were initiated between the university's foreign language education program and school districts. Given that foreign language certification in Florida was K-12, such experience was deemed essential. In addition to changes in placements, clinical experience prerequisites were made more stringent. A frequent complaint of supervising teachers was the lack of preparation in content and pedagogical knowledge of the student teachers. To address this concern, foreign language education majors were no longer permitted to complete Internship I during their junior year. The second semester of their junior year, which used to be reserved for this initial internship, would be dedicated to additional content preparation. During the summer term of their junior year, students would complete elementary and secondary methods courses in back-to-back summer institutes. This additional preparation would ready them for Internship I in the fall of their senior year. Most students concluded their teacher education program with Internship II in the spring of their senior year. According to comments made by students, supervising teachers, and university clinical personnel, this change has enhanced student teaching abilities, paving the way for a more successful internship.

Finally, scheduling Internship I was often extremely difficult, given that students typically had to coordinate this teacher education requirement with two or

three language courses that met several times a week during the day. The internship and the language courses constituted a student's course load that semester. Internship I student teachers were required to attend their placements all day on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Registering for this clinical experience during a particular semester was thus often dictated by whether the required language courses were being offered at the same time. Given that language courses tended not to be offered during the summer or were offered during alternate years, students would often opt to take the language courses as soon as they were available, knowing that their clinical experiences could be completed any fall or spring semester. This situation caused students' tenures at the university to be unfairly lengthened, as they spent additional time, money, and effort trying to satisfy programmatic requirements. Students often left the program out of frustration.

Meetings with both the Director of Clinical Experiences in the College of Education and with foreign language faculty provided some degree of resolution to the problem. Instead of adhering strictly to the all-day Tuesday/Thursday Internship I schedule, foreign language education majors were now permitted to schedule their internships around their foreign language courses. University clinical personnel who supervise these student teachers were made aware of the uniqueness of the interns' situations and were generally very accommodating of their atypical schedules. In addition, foreign language faculty, who were now more cognizant of teacher certification requirements, were much more willing to offer students with scheduling conflicts independent study courses to facilitate their completion of certification requirements. Student completion of programmatic requirements was significantly enhanced by this cross-college cooperation.

### ***Foreign Language Education and Foreign Language Advisement Handbook***

Another problematic area was the advising of mutual advisees by the foreign language department and foreign language education program. Misinformation or lack of information given to students was rampant because of the lack of collaboration and awareness of program degree requirements between both sets of faculty. Foreign language faculty were not kept abreast of ever-changing state requirements for teaching certification. In addition, the foreign language department instituted a policy of not allowing native speakers of the language to take certain 3000-level language courses because of their proficiency in the language. Not only was the foreign language education program previously unaware of this policy; it was also not privy to alternative language courses that could be substituted for the program requisites. This lack of communication between the two disciplines resulted in time-consuming, inefficient advising by both sets of faculty advisors.

To resolve this problem, I collaborated with two foreign language professors to create an advising manual to be used by both faculty advisors and advisees. One area requiring extensive collaboration was the establishment of separate tracks for native speakers, non-native speakers, and students who complete study-abroad programs. Since our advisees tended to have tremendously different backgrounds

and levels of linguistic proficiency, affording them flexibility in course requirements was necessary. Our development of three separate tracks of study reflected this flexibility.

The resultant, comprehensive advising manual, *University of Central Florida Foreign Language Education and Foreign Language Advisement Handbook* (Verkler, López, & Ferro, 2001), addressed issues that foreign language and foreign language education majors might encounter throughout their entire tenure at the university, such as advising contacts, procedures for admittance into the College of Education, and study-abroad programs. Upon completion of this manual, copies were disseminated to all foreign language faculty. Faculty advisors were sent updates or revisions as needed. Foreign language education advisees were also provided with a copy. Student and faculty comments indicated that the creation of this manual enhanced and facilitated advising immensely.

### **Foreign Language Education Summer Institutes**

In Florida, certification requirements for foreign language education dictate that teachers have K-12 certification. At some institutions this requirement constitutes a single methods course that runs the gamut of K-12 developmental stages of students. At most Florida universities, however, teaching candidates must take two methods courses—one addressing the secondary level and the other focusing on elementary and middle school. These courses are required for both foreign language education majors and post-baccalaureate individuals seeking add-on or alternative certification. The target audience for these methods courses is thus rather diverse.

To accommodate the sundry needs of the students populating these courses, I decided to offer them during the summer. Inquiry indicated that at the time no other institutions throughout Florida were offering these methods courses during the summer. Attaining add-on or alternative certification was very difficult because of scheduling and logistical demands. Some teachers did not reside near a university offering the course. For others, juggling methods courses, which by their very nature necessitate hands-on practical application of concepts, with an already over-taxed schedule was not feasible. It became readily apparent that there was a need for two methods institutes during the summer.

To schedule the institutes, I accessed the State Department of Education database for the school calendars of all the school districts in Florida. After determining the last teacher attendance date for all 67 Florida school districts, I scheduled the institutes accordingly. This scheduling permitted the enrollment of teachers from any of Florida's school districts. The institutes, which were offered as back-to-back, 6-day-long workshops from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., began on the Monday following the last teacher attendance date. Addressing feedback acquired from the county and advisory council meetings, the institutes were developed as highly interactive, communicatively-based experiences reflecting the practical application of current trends in foreign language pedagogy. Their curriculum was heavily

aligned with the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning* (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 1999) of Communication, Culture, Connections, Comparison, and Community. These national standards were the foundation upon which the state standards for foreign languages were built.

The enrollment of both pre-service and in-service teachers in the institutes has proven to be a very successful mixture. When queried about the presence of inservice teachers in the courses, undergraduates indicated that they appreciated the insight more experienced teachers could provide regarding effective teaching strategies, the workings of the education profession, and classroom management strategies. They also valued the mentoring that inservice teachers readily offered them. In addition, the currently practicing teachers were often privy to employment opportunities, information that they eagerly disseminated. The inservice teachers in turn appreciated the youthful exuberance and creative ideas offered by the foreign language education majors.

During the last two years of the institutes, student enrollment grew to such an extent that the previous classroom in which the course was offered could no longer accommodate the swelling student enrollment. Arrangements were made with a nearby professional development school to hold the institutes at their facility. The partnership proved to be mutually beneficial: institute participants appreciated being able to avail themselves of the resources offered by the facility, and the school personnel valued the accessibility of a university liaison on their campus.

### **Advertising the Revised Foreign Language Education Program**

At the conclusion of my first year as foreign language education program coordinator, the undergraduate foreign language education program was sufficiently rebuilt. The task was then to attract students to the revised foreign language education program. Advertising, good public relations, and recruitment were needed to build up the program.

E-mail databases of foreign language contacts, foreign language newsletters, and flyers served as forums for advertising. E-mail messages and flyers touting program requirements and course offerings were sent to all 67 Florida school districts. Course offerings were also advertised on a regular basis in a newsletter published triennially for members of the state's foreign language association. The University of Central Florida, in its recruitment efforts during student orientation, also served as a vehicle for the dissemination of program information.

Over time, advertisement by word of mouth from former students also contributed significantly to increasing the student population in the foreign language education program. Summer institute participants communicated their impressions to other educators. Consequently, enrollment has tripled over the last four years.

Student comments suggest that the success of the institutes was due to several factors that were integrated into the entire experience to make it extremely attractive to participants:

- The institutes were scheduled to accommodate teachers' schedules.
- The duration of each institute was 6 days.
- The institutes were highly interactive, participatory, experiential courses that completely immersed participants in the content for a short, intensive period of time.
- Participants were permitted to avail themselves of all the resources, including computers, at the professional development school.
- Time was built into the institute for the completion of most of the course assignments.
- The turn-around time for the grading of assignments was short, allowing students to leave the institute cognizant of the grade they earned.

### **Future Plans**

Program development must be viewed as a dynamic, rather than static process. As the foreign language education program grows, the need for frequent formative evaluation becomes all the more important. No longer solely a venue for the initial certification of foreign language teachers, the foreign language education program must undergo regular evaluation to assess the program's ability to accommodate the changes in licensure requirements, student demographics, professional development needs of inservice and preservice teachers, and research and current trends in foreign language instruction. Programmatic revisions will be effected as dictated by the results of such evaluation.

Future plans for the foreign language education program involve graduate degrees as well as enhanced interdisciplinary efforts between the College of Education and the College of Arts and Sciences. A foreign language education certificate program is in the process of being included as a specialization area in an M.Ed. in Curriculum and Instruction. A Master of Arts in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages is an example of interdisciplinary cooperation, as several of the foreign language education certificate courses are currently being highly recommended to TESOL graduate students as courses that complement their TESOL preparation well.

### **Conclusion**

Five years have transpired since the change in leadership of the foreign language education program occurred. The directive was to rebuild a dying program: "Rebuild the program, and they will come back." As program coordinator, I significantly overhauled the outmoded and failing program infrastructure (see Appendix for timeline of events in the revision of the program). I revised and updated program requirements to satisfy current state certification criteria. Courses no longer being offered were eliminated, and others were added to address current foreign language theory and pedagogy. The Director of Clinical Experiences expanded internships to include K-8 placements. The Office of Clinical Experiences granted students, whose tenure in the teacher education program was historically

lengthy because of scheduling conflicts with their language course requirements, flexibility in scheduling their clinical experiences. The *University of Central Florida Foreign Language Education and Foreign Language Advisement Handbook* (Verkler, López, & Ferro, 2001) enhanced interdisciplinary faculty advising of mutual students. The University of Central Florida Foreign Language Education Advisory Council forged university partnerships with service area school districts. Summer institutes in foreign language pedagogy attracted statewide student enrollment by teachers seeking certification in foreign language. A foreign language education graduate certificate program, which is paving the way for additional foreign language education graduate programs, was implemented. Advertising efforts were heightened, yielding increased student enrollment in both undergraduate and graduate courses. The foreign language education program has not only been rebuilt; it is now a vastly different entity. The resultant program is much more student-oriented, efficient, articulated, and grounded in sound current foreign language pedagogy and theory, and the students are coming back.

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# 7

## Graduate Teaching Assistant Training: Pathways to Success

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### Abstract

*Graduate teaching assistant (GTA) training is integral to the successful operation of introductory foreign language (FL) classes at many post-secondary institutions. Addressing the improvement of GTA supervision and the overall quality of introductory-level language classes, this study consists first of an overview of the most current practices in GTA training in the United States. The second part of the article presents the parameters of the qualitative study on GTAs in the Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures at the University of South Carolina-Columbia (USC Columbia). The study itself consists of the following: (1) peer observations of GTAs, in which the GTAs pay particular attention to specific teaching points during each observation, with each observation taking place after the authors discuss a specific teaching point in the required methodology classes; (2) interactive group discussions based on peer observations via an electronic bulletin board; and (3) an initial questionnaire, a reflective essay, and a final survey used to collect data regarding how the GTAs' views on teaching had evolved over the semester. The third section of the article is the analysis of the collected data. The conclusion considers the results obtained in the study and the application of those results to the improvement of GTA training and subsequently the teaching of university-level introductory FL classes.*

### Background

In most American universities offering graduate-level courses, graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) occupy a central role in the basic courses in foreign language (FL) programs. These GTAs are students pursuing graduate degrees either at the master's or doctoral level, while at the same time they are instructors in the language program. To be successful as students and as teachers, GTAs must be knowledgeable about many diverse topics related to language, such as linguistics (Herschensohn, 1992; Fox, 1992), second language acquisition theory (Mason, 1992; Rifkin, 2003), cultural similarities and differences between themselves and their students (Rifkin, 1992), in addition to the perspectives, practices, and products of the countries where the target language is spoken (National Standards in

Foreign Language Education Project [NSFLEP], 1999), curriculum design (Nunan 1989, 1990), issues in articulation (VanValkenburg & Arnett, 2000), technology (Furstenberg, 1997; Scott, 1998), and FL teaching methodology (Mason, 1992; Melin, 2000). Ideally, most GTAs will gain competency in these areas with proper instruction and sufficient practice.

At the University of South Carolina-Columbia (USC Columbia), GTAs in the Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures are required to attend pre-session orientation meetings, successfully complete a course in the methodology of teaching FLs in college, and be observed by the departmental GTA supervisor, who is also the director of basic courses. The underlying principle guiding GTA instruction at USC Columbia is the link between second language acquisition and FL teaching theories and practice. In developing a GTA preparation program, Wright (1987) and Menges and Rando (1989) propose that language theory and practice exist in complementary distribution. In support of this, Lee (1989) posits that the most important task of the director of basic courses is “to ensure that the language programs are a reflection of what research tells us about how adults develop abilities in another language” (p. 3). By extension, the same belief can be applied to GTA preparation.

In addition, to test GTAs’ hypotheses derived from their preconceived notions of language theory and teaching methods and to gain further practical experience, many GTA trainers require their students to conduct observations of other GTAs as well as of seasoned faculty. A recent survey of 21 syllabi used in GTA methodology courses demonstrated that one third of the programs require peer observation (FLTEACH 2003).

Further, 59% of GTA trainers with syllabi posted on FLTEACH (2003) require the development and use of lesson plans, a practice that follows Rifkin’s (2003) claim that the preparation of formal lesson plans allows GTAs to explicitly link language theory to teaching practice and improves their performance in instruction.

Lastly, in order to provide a means for reflection of how theory and practice coexist, Lee (1989), Wildner-Bassett (1992), Kinginger (1995, 1998), Richards (1998), and Melin (2000) propose the use of reflective journals that could incorporate the use of computer technology via on-line asynchronous exchanges (Lomicka, Lord, & Manzer, 2003), in which pre-existing knowledge is combined with newly acquired knowledge, resulting in practice that is reflected upon and modified as necessary. Given the opportunity to reflect on and exchange ideas with peers and experts, GTAs develop increased levels of professional competence (Wallace, 1991).

Although many GTA training programs exist, few empirical studies have been conducted to determine the most effective ways to train GTAs and the impact that well-trained GTAs have on the overall success of language programs (see Wildner-Bassett, 1992). For this reason, GTA preparation programs seem to be in a state of constant analysis, evaluation, and revision (von Hoene, 1995). It is our goal herein to address and measure the linking of theory to practice in two GTA teaching methods courses via classroom instruction, peer evaluations, and online discussions.

## Methods

### *Participants*

Students from two different Spanish and German teaching methodology classes comprised of 10 GTAs, including six Spanish and four German GTAs, took part in this study. Only one GTA had previous teaching experience, and all were first year master's students at USC Columbia. The methodology classes used the same textbook, Omaggio-Hadley's *Teaching Language in Context* (2001), and the syllabi were synchronized so that each class discussed similar topics and read the same chapters each week. GTAs also had similar homework assignments and were required to turn in lesson plans throughout the semester.

### *Electronic Discussions*

In addition to their homework assignments in reference to the readings, GTAs participated in five week-long electronic discussions divided into two groups of three and one group of four. The goal of these exchanges was for GTAs to internalize and process what they had read in their textbook and discussed in their methodology classes, and then to share what they had learned in an asynchronous online discussion with students from a different class. In two of the online discussions, GTAs read about a specific topic, addressed it in class, and then chatted about it in their online groups during the same week.

In the other three online discussions, however, there were three components. In week one, GTAs read the assigned chapter in Omaggio-Hadley (2001) and discussed the material in their classes. In week two, GTAs designed lesson plans that incorporated the recently discussed topic, a reading or speaking task, for example, and then one of their group members observed them incorporating this new skill into their lesson. In week three, GTAs developed the topic in their online discussions in groups of three or four, focusing on ideas for ways to teach the specific skill, challenges when teaching the skill, and praise and/or suggestions for improvement in regard to their fellow group members' teaching. GTAs were provided with an observation guide for each classroom visit to encourage them to focus on specific aspects of their group members' classes, especially with respect to the topic of the week. Prior to participating in the chat, GTAs had already learned about teaching the specific skill from both a theoretical and practical perspective, taught their own class focusing on that skill, and observed a peer teaching that skill. This procedure provided GTAs with many different perspectives from which to consider the topic in the electronic discussions.

Each of the topics was provided for the GTAs in the course syllabus with a series of questions to guide their conversations. GTAs were also reminded that the trigger questions were only suggestions to initiate conversation and were encouraged to take the chat in related directions in which they were most interested. In addition to the trigger questions, students were provided with a rubric used to evaluate the discussions. This scale reminded them of the importance of linking the theory they read about in their text to the practical knowledge they acquired

during their teaching and observing, as well as the importance of promoting a dialogue within the chats, because students were encouraged to address and respond to their fellow group members. (See Appendix A for the list of questions and Appendix B for the rubric.)

To assess how GTAs' beliefs about FL teaching changed over the course of the semester, they completed a questionnaire at the beginning and wrote a reflective essay at the end of the semester about what they thought were the most and least effective methods of language teaching. In the initial questionnaire, GTAs were asked specific questions about how they learned their first FL in regard to the four skills and the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning* (NSFLEP, 1999). They were also asked, based on their experience learning a language, what they believed were the most effective ways to teach a language. At the end of the semester, for the reflective essay, GTAs were asked to write a four- to five-page philosophy-of-teaching statement in which they again explained their ideas about the most effective methods to teach a FL. They also completed a survey at the end of the study that assessed how much they enjoyed the online discussions, whether they believed the online discussions aided in their development as FL teachers, and how the online discussions affected their ideas about using technology in FL teaching.

### *Why Online discussions?*

Sociocultural theory suggests that learning and critical thinking are most effectively mediated on an external or social plane through discussion and scaffolding with other peers or experts (Vygotsky, 1978). Asynchronous online discussion fosters collaboration and gives students time to read others' postings, reflect on them, and construct a carefully planned response (Cole, Raffier, Rogan, & Schleicher, 1998; Kahmi-Stein, 2000; Sengupta, 2001). Students who do not readily participate in class discussions or students who need more time to construct their comments or ideas also benefit from online discussions because they have the necessary time to structure their comments to engage in deeper critical thinking than in face-to-face conversations (Newman, Johnson, Cochrane, & Webb, 1996; Newman, Webb, & Cochrane, 1995). Students also have the time to reflect on and express new ideas while constructing new meanings with their group members (Meyer, 2003). In addition to these cognitive advantages, the discussions also provide a social service. As has been found in previous studies on online communication (Kang, 1996; Kanuka & Anderson, 1998), discussion boards function as a support group, enabling new teachers to reflect on the challenges and triumphs they face in the FL classroom.

### *Data*

The data in this study are comprised of the initial questionnaire and the reflective essay in regard to GTAs' beliefs about FL teaching, the final survey of GTAs' opinions about the online discussions, the three observation guides completed by each class member, and the transcripts from the five asynchronous online

discussions. To support the findings from the initial questionnaires and reflective essays, the online discussions were analyzed with the goal of finding illustrations of deeper understandings and changes in beliefs from conferring with other GTAs about specific topics in FL teaching methodology. Also noted was how the chat and observations helped GTAs to internalize the newly learned information and subsequently apply it to their teaching to become informed, reflective teachers.

## Results

### *Teaching Reading and Listening*

As the semester progressed and the GTAs were presented with the theoretical and practical aspects of the teaching of listening and reading, most referenced similar strategies in the online discussions and reflective essays in regard to effective methods of teaching these skills. First of all, almost all the GTAs demonstrated awareness for the importance of pre-reading/listening tasks, such as brainstorming, nonverbal cues (e.g., gestures) and visual stimuli (e.g., pictures and videos) to activate schemata and assist in the comprehension of the target language. They also discussed during-tasks to focus on the important information in the text, and post-tasks to personalize and apply the information learned from the text.

This revelation about the effectiveness of pre-, during-, and post-tasks, specifically activating schemata, is evident in the following exchange: “It never occurred to me before we talked about it in class how important it is to present some pre-reading tasks to activate their schema.” This was answered with:

Definitely as you say including a pre-reading exercise has a great impact on how students will take the activity. Actually you can introduce them to the topic without them really realizing that they are actually talking about what they will be reading.

And then concurred with: “I also agree with you all on the importance of schema activation.” The writer continued, “So I’m glad you all mentioned this. This is something I never thought of before teaching this semester.” Specifically, the use of pictures to bind form to meaning as a pre-listening exercise focusing on vocabulary, as a student commented, resulted in the class’s “lov(ing) this exercise.” In response to this comment, a GTA posted the following:

Through my experiences with . . . Omaggio, I’ve come to appreciate the importance of activating the schemata. It seems especially important in regard to listening . . . because there is so much vagueness for students at the low-levels in this kind of exercise. . . . Using the pictures, objects or materials like that helps them sort out the details that they may have missed when they were listening.

Another GTA added that activating schemata, as well as personalization in the post-listening activities “are the most important points to remember when working with . . . listening exercises. The students must be able to relate with some aspect of the content; they must be able to see how it could affect their lives.”

Each of the above postings illustrates how their authors now realize the importance of the three stages involved with listening and reading tasks. Other GTAs commented on how they always wondered why they had trouble understanding texts in previous FL classes but now realize it was because they did not receive the appropriate preparation and felt that they needed to understand every word to comprehend the text. To effectively teach listening and reading, GTAs reported that much care should be taken when selecting texts. Authentic texts, which “should correspond to the level . . . and the needs of the students,” are essential because “they represent exactly what students might encounter later using the foreign language.” Further, another GTA comments on her new appreciation for authentic texts:

I thought that most authentic texts [were] too difficult for them but I found out that it's not that difficult at all because the language used in the texts is relatively redundant. And you really can guess most of the things from the context. But you also have to teach them how to do it.

In regard to listening, training the ear and providing students with large quantities of meaningful comprehensible input were noted as being very important. One GTA noted that “the instructor [should] speak the target language in the classroom as much as possible, adjusting his level of language depending on the students.” Over time, with the use of nonverbal communication, cognates, and repetition, students became skilled in “understanding my talk.”

When the results of the reflective essay are compared with those of the initial questionnaire, it is evident that the GTAs' views of teaching reading and listening evolved over the semester, even though many of them already had effective ideas. In the initial questionnaire, GTAs mentioned using both authentic materials and texts as a source for new vocabulary, as well as using a variety of tasks when teaching. However, at the end of the study, GTAs were able to give examples of the most effective types of tasks during the three different stages of reading and listening (which they could then name), as well as to define the difference between bottom-up and top-down approaches and their applications to teaching the interpretive skills. The analysis of the online discussions and the reflective essays illustrates that GTAs changed their views of teaching listening in regard to activating schemata, personalization of topics, using authentic texts, and providing comprehensible input.

### *Teaching Writing*

Much in the same way that GTAs reflected on listening and reading over the course of the semester, they thought about the significance of the role of writing in the world language curriculum. GTAs commented on the value of assigning

writing topics that are meaningful and purposeful to the students, so that students can connect personal experiences to the topic and even engage in risk-taking by trying to venture outside of their comfort zones from the onset of their language studies. They also noted that writing assignments, in addition to promoting creativity, should be given often and should include opportunities for formal and informal writing, using pencil and paper or synchronous or asynchronous chats. Writing tasks should progress from guided to open-ended, and instill an understanding of grammatical forms in the learners. Writing should also be integrated with other language skills, such as reading or listening, to replicate the interdependent environment in which writing exists in the real world.

One issue that perplexed the GTAs because of the objectivity inherent in the process was that of how best to assess writing. One of them expressed his concern as to how it may be difficult to grade a student's writing sample based on its content, creativity and [grammatical] accuracy. Another responded by stating that although a

communicative approach to teaching [writing] presupposes a “lenient attitude” to grammar mistakes as long as they don't prevent the speakers from successful communication, I find it crucial to pay much attention to accuracy in writing tasks and assignments.

In this GTA's view, adopting a grammar-based approach to writing “really helps and develops good grammar skills.”

In response to this posting, another GTA wrote, “I personally liked” the fact that in my FL learning experience, instruction “was [based] on grammar.” However, the same GTA finally conceded that grammar may not be of central importance in the assessment of writing skills. In class,

we discussed a study where students received feedback on the content rather than the grammar in their journal entries. By the end of the year, they were writing more in their journals, etc. And I would imagine their grammar improved simply due to the nature of the practice.

This is a clear demonstration of how the student's pedagogical philosophy metamorphosed over the course of the semester. Another GTA responded that if we want our students “to communicate . . . , it is good to use writing in a more creative way instead of focusing too much on grammar and accuracy.”

One GTA specifically noted the value of requiring students to correct their own errors in accordance with coding done by the instructor on the writing samples as opposed to having the instructor provide the students with the corrections. In this way, “the student actively learns rather than playing the role of a passive scribe, who merely rewrites previously corrected work.” Another GTA agreed with this position and claimed that although not being provided with the correct answers can be frustrating, being able to correct oneself can result in a sense of accomplishment when self-correcting is done through a system of codes.



Another GTA commented on the importance of stressing the process over the product, especially at the beginning levels of language instruction, then moving

toward the quality of the product and the creativity contained in it at a higher level. If students do not have a solid background from which to work, then they will not be as able to organize their thoughts into a discernable product at the upper level.

In response to this, another GTA stated, “that an emphasis upon the process leads students to writing more by the end of the semester. . . . It’s important at the beginning stages to emphasize the process rather than the grammatical accuracy.”

At the beginning of the semester, most GTAs were in agreement that it is important to choose topics familiar to the students, to encourage students to be creative while simultaneously guiding them through the writing process, and to incorporate grammar and vocabulary in the writing task. Now the GTAs have clearer methods for handling error correction and assessment, while encouraging originality. The polemic that still exists in many of their minds is how to strike a balance between producing writing samples that are accurate enough to demonstrate knowledge of the grammatical structure of the language while simultaneously showing creativity. Most likely this procedure will become clearer to the GTAs as they gain more experience and further explore the published research in the field.

### *Teaching Grammar*

The principal issues treated in the discussion of grammar centered on whether grammar should be presented inductively or deductively; GTA perceptions about grammar, such as holding students accountable for the acquisition of grammar rules; and how much emphasis should be placed on grammar in the communicative classroom.

One GTA felt that teaching grammar inductively is especially helpful with beginning students; however, at advanced levels grammar is best taught deductively. One major obstacle encountered when teaching beginning students is that “so many students are used to a more deductive approach, and so they haven’t developed the ability to question and discover.” They must be trained “to become active participants in the language learning process,” an integral part of an inductive approach to the teaching of grammar that results in higher rates of acquisition. Another GTA stated that although the inductive approach is effective most of the time, students who are unable to formulate the rule should be afforded the opportunity to learn by addressing their preferred learning style, in this case via a deductive approach. Some students who are more analytical “clearly NEED the deductive approach.” These views were shared by the majority of GTAs, even though most of them were taught grammar deductively in their L2 classes.

It is clear that by being presented with classroom instruction and models focusing on both inductive and deductive approaches to the teaching of grammar, reading published research, engaging in electronic discussions, and conducting peer observations focusing on the role of grammar in the L2 classroom, GTAs

were able to select the method best suited to their students' needs, despite any preconceived notions they possessed with regard to grammar prior to this semester. One GTA wrote, "Throughout the semester, my method of teaching grammar has changed significantly. In the beginning of the semester, I taught the material the way I was taught, overuse of the mother tongue and grammar tables." He continued, "Inductive grammar . . . was a godsend" because it breaks "the monotony and anxiety associated with grammar table memorization," which significantly lowers the affective filter, resulting in higher levels of language acquisition. Another GTA concluded that "the inductive method allows for more interaction and creativity on the part of the students and helps them create meaningful connections to the material being presented."

In the communicative L2 classroom, the goal should be communication; class time should not be dedicated to "meaningless grammar drills," posits one GTA. She continues, "Grammar exercises that *are* done during class time should be planned carefully to allow the students not only the opportunity to practice the concept, but also to express meaningful content, such as their own thoughts and ideas."

Most students reiterated the threads common to all aspects of the communicative L2 classroom, in addition to grammar: contextualization, non-linguistic stimuli, and personalization. "According to the communicative approach the main emphasis should be put on communication and grammar should only be taught as a necessary means to achieve this," one GTA claimed. While most GTAs at the beginning of the semester recognized that non-contextualized, non-meaning-bearing, and non-pragmatic grammar activities were ineffective, many seemed to change their perspectives concerning deductive and inductive approaches. Whereas some GTAs seemed convinced of the efficacy of a deductive-only approach in their initial questionnaire, most especially supported the value of an inductive approach to teaching grammar.

### *Teaching Speaking*

When discussing what they had learned about teaching speaking in their reflective essays, GTAs seemed to find the issue of error correction of greatest importance. Most agreed that error correction should not interrupt the flow of ideas in a communicative speaking task, but that focus on form should wait until after a task is completed or should occur during accuracy tasks. The task type was also viewed as an important consideration in the planning of a speaking activity. Half of the GTAs stressed the importance of a meaningful task in a context that students may encounter in the target culture, as well as a personalized topic on which students can discuss subjects in which they are interested. Encouraging learners to practice speaking and express their own meanings as early as possible was also deemed necessary. In order to minimize anxiety, several GTAs suggested having learners work in pairs or small groups with the instructor monitoring their progress while completing such tasks as role-plays or information-gap activities, and then having learners present what they discussed to hold them accountable for

their discussions. Finally, several GTAs mentioned the importance of activating learners' schemata with pictures or graphic organizers before engaging in a speaking task.

In the online discussions, GTAs were able to brainstorm and hone their ideas about how to teach speaking most effectively. Common topics were partner work, error correction, motivating shy students, contextualizing tasks and activating schemata with visual aids and realia, incorporating other skills into speaking tasks, and designing role-plays. While each of these topics was discussed in the methods courses, GTAs were able to explore them further through the online discussions, as well as to ask each other their opinions about these various topics and share their experiences teaching speaking so far. One group, for example, engaged in a discussion about role-plays and their ideas for incorporating them into class. One question that was posed, "I wanted to ask you what you think of role-plays and if you have any interesting ones in store?," was answered,

I think that role-plays are a pretty good way to integrate speaking tasks.  
... I'm sorry but I don't have any role-plays in store. I can try to explain how you can probably create one. What I do is the following: . . ."

From this initiation, other group members weighed in, and the discussion progressed to the different kinds of role-plays and what makes one more effective than another.

By the end of the semester, the GTAs seemed to have many more ideas about teaching speaking than they did at the beginning. In the pre-questionnaire, GTAs mentioned pair-work and giving a goal for speaking tasks, but the majority of what they discussed in the reflective essay was neglected in the initial questionnaire, such as error correction, task type, personalization, and real-life contexts and tasks, all of which were salient topics in the online discussions.

### *Teaching Culture*

When relating their new philosophies about teaching culture, almost all GTAs agreed that language and culture are intertwined; therefore, one cannot be taught without the other. Almost everyone also decided that authentic materials were the most effective tools for exposing students to the target culture and that these materials could also be used to practice other skills, such as reading or listening. In terms of how to teach culture, most GTAs commented that a facts-only approach should be avoided because it allows students to develop stereotypes. Comparing and contrasting the native and target cultures, teaching culture in terms of the 3 Ps (products, perspectives, and practices), using e-mail exchanges or weblogs, inviting native informants, having students complete Venn diagrams, and giving presentations were also mentioned as effective methods of teaching culture.

In the online discussion about culture, GTAs reviewed many of these same topics as well as others. The German GTAs were interested to hear how Spanish instructors decide which Hispanic cultures to teach and how they deal with

focusing on some culture without neglecting others. Since, as the GTAs pointed out, there are no specific “rules” for teaching culture and time in class to devote to culture is limited, the online discussion allowed the GTAs to brainstorm ideas for teaching culture and which aspects of culture to focus on. One GTA had decided by the end of the exchange to “incorporate classical music next semester for sure” as well as to bring to class examples of German art. GTAs weighed the benefits of an e-mail exchange as well as inviting a native informant to class for the students to interview. In addition to brainstorming, they also talked about ways they currently incorporate culture into their classes, as one GTA observed:

In my first class, when we did the activity about being an exchange student in Argentina, the students were all asking questions about what it was like in Córdoba. I was a little worried because last time I shared photos with them, some students were giving me a look that said, ‘Why do we want to see your pictures?’; but this time they were all asking about it.

This GTA was excited to share her successful culture exercise and remarked that one of her students approached her after class to discuss the possibility of studying abroad.

Other GTAs shared information about the German culture presentations their students gave during the semester in which the learners prepared a short report on different geographical regions in a German-speaking country:

Learning about the other regions of the German-speaking world, thus, is important in rounding out their knowledge. Also, even though presentations are given in English, important vocabulary and grammatical exemplification make it to the table. This is something I didn’t expect, but enjoy tremendously.

Although this online discussion was not based on observations, it still seemed especially useful to the GTAs because they could brainstorm ideas for teaching a topic for which they had no specific tools, such as pre-, during-, and post-tasks for teaching reading.

Realia were the most salient resource mentioned in both the initial questionnaire and reflective essays for teaching culture; however, in the reflective essay, GTAs had more ideas about how to utilize authentic materials for teaching culture and offered more specific examples for integrating culture into a lesson. They also commented on the importance of teaching students to find both similarities and differences between their cultures and the target cultures rather than providing them with random facts that could lead to the formation of stereotypes. Overall, GTAs had a cursory knowledge of methods of teaching culture at the beginning of the semester, but by the end of the semester, they had developed more specific methods of incorporating culture into their lessons and could more successfully judge what was most effective and why.

*Observations*

In addition to experiencing lessons using the methods they had discussed most recently in their classes, GTAs found that the observations allowed them to encounter other strategies about teaching. Several of them commented that they noticed that they should speak more in the target language after they observed GTAs in the classroom who spoke entirely in the target language and were understood. Others were interested to see how their peers put students into groups, played music before class, and showed interest in students on a personal level. In general, GTAs formulated ideas about teaching, as well as concluded that not everyone is a perfect teacher nor are they expected to be. One GTA commented that he was happy to discover that he was not the only one who could not finish everything on the syllabus in 50 minutes. The observations thus served as occasions for witnessing and developing new ideas, opportunities to experience theory in practice and the various ways it can be applied, as well as possible validation for new teachers.

Through the observations, GTAs were able to learn specifically how to improve the way they treat grammar in the FL classroom. One of them stated,

I learned ways to avoid resorting to English—continually explaining it [grammar] in different and/or more simple terms until students understand. I am working hard to train my students to try to catch the main idea and not constantly expect me to repeat things in English—I won't do that with them now.

Through her observation, another GTA learned that regardless of the quantity or quality of the grammar explanations, “regular practice with students is essential ... in order to assimilate and use it [grammar] to communicate their needs as accurately as possible.”

In terms of teaching speaking, one GTA commented that after seeing how “schemata activation can truly enhance an activity and give it more depth and meaning for the students, I plan to focus myself on really developing this part of my lesson plans.” It was not until she saw schema activation demonstrated that she really understood how effectively it could be done. Another had a similar comment about how the person she observed contextualized and personalized activities, while yet another noticed how much “students love creative tasks . . . and learn a lot from each other as well as from the professor” when working in groups because they can “arrive at the conclusion together.”

In regard to listening and reading, GTAs also found new ideas for enhancing their classroom teaching. For example, one noticed how a teacher showed pictures to activate schema before playing a listening text and planned to incorporate that procedure into his lessons. Two other GTAs changed their lesson plans based on observations and were quite impressed with the change in their next classes, as is illustrated in the following comment:

For me, this was a very interesting topic to observe because I got the chance to watch someone else give a nearly identical lesson to the one that I had already taught earlier in the week and would again teach later that day. It gave me an interesting perspective to experience it from the students' perspective and to see exactly how they hear what we are saying. I tweaked a few things and added some expansion questions that came to mind and I feel like my last lesson was the best of the three.

Her observation of someone else's class allowed her to see the lesson from the viewpoint of the students and then change it to benefit their learning more fully. Although some GTAs complained that the classes they observed in a different language were hard to understand, they still seemed to take something useful away from every lesson and expressed plans to apply what they learned in their own classes.

### *Survey results*

The survey given at the end of the semester consisted of 13 Likert-type and four short-answer questions. The questions assessed the degree to which GTAs enjoyed the discussions and observations in general, as well as what they felt the cognitive gains and affective advantages of the exchange were. The results of the survey mirror the results of the discussion analysis in which GTAs demonstrated that they were able to discuss the relation of practice and theory, practice using new terms in context, and process the newly-learned material on a higher level through discussion with other students.

### *Enjoyment Questions*

Of the 13 Likert-type questions, six addressed the extent to which the GTAs enjoyed the chat and the observations. Nine of 10 GTAs reported that they liked the discussions and chatting with GTAs outside their methodology classes. All of those surveyed reported that they experienced a sense of community with their group members and profited from observing other GTAs in the classroom, and all but two students, both of whom were neutral on the subject, enjoyed observing GTAs who taught other languages.

When asked in a short-answer question what should change if such an exchange were conducted again, the majority of students reported that they had no suggestions for improvement. One GTA recommended teacher involvement the next time, and another brought up the option of being able to read what other groups were discussing. Two other GTAs suggested that the teachers coordinate who observed whom, since this organization was left to the GTAs and sometimes resulted in confusion. In regard to the comments about observations, all GTAs were positive about their experiences both observing other GTAs and being observed. From the perspective of the observer, they reported that it gave them new ideas: "It was very helpful to see how other teachers handled different situations." "It was interesting to observe a wide variety of teaching styles." GTAs also felt

that being observed helped them to improve their teaching through feedback by their peers. One GTA reported that her group members “point[ed] out strengths that I hadn’t noticed (which always had a positive affect on my self-esteem).” Overall, these questions dealing with how much GTAs benefited from the electronic exchanges and the observations reveal that the GTAs were favorable towards both experiences.

### *Cognitive Questions*

In response to the three cognitive Likert-type questions, GTAs again replied positively. All but one of them reported that chatting with other GTAs helped them to look at topics from perspectives they would not have considered on their own. Eight said the process of talking/writing through topics helped them to understand the topics better, and seven reported that they learned things in the discussions they would not have learned on their own. Everyone agreed that they gained new ideas for teaching that they either used or plan to use in future lessons. In response to the short-answer question that dealt with the cognitive side of the chat, GTAs reported that they liked “sharing ideas,” that they understood the material more fully due to the chats, and that the chats helped them “focus on the material and think deeper” and helped them to “apply the theory to practice.” These survey results, in addition to the outcome of the analysis of the discussion transcripts, illustrate that the chats enabled GTAs to process the newly-learned material on deeper levels than if they had not engaged in the electronic discussions, as well as provided them with new teaching ideas.

### *Affective Questions*

In terms of the affective side of the discussion, GTAs agreed that the forum created a low-anxiety environment. Seven of them reported that they were able to ask questions they would not have asked in class discussions and that the chats provided a more relaxed environment. In the short-answer questions, GTAs agreed that they felt comfortable conversing “freely” and that the “affective filter was definitely lower.” One commented, “This helped me out a lot to say how I felt and express myself better.” The fact that GTAs were more relaxed in the on-line discussions, possibly due to the lack of teacher presence or the abundance of time to read and process someone’s posting and then to formulate a response, likely contributed positively to their cognitive development.

In response to the final short-answer question, 8 of the 10 participating GTAs replied that they would be more likely to integrate computer-mediated communication (CMC) into their classes after having participated in this exchange. They reported that they “enjoyed it and benefited from it and saw how well it worked” and that it is a “good way to have a deeper interaction.” Not only did the electronic discussions provide GTAs with an effective forum for discussing new ideas, but it also introduced them to CMC from the students’ perspective, thereby encouraging them to use CMC in their future classes.

## Conclusion

While many FL teaching methodology classes incorporate observations into their syllabi, and some require students to keep journals of their teaching experiences, few classes combine these exercises with online communication with another class. Instead of discussing the same topics with other GTAs from their class and their instructor, the online discussion allowed them to meet with other beginning graduate students on line to learn about their views of FL teaching and to experience through observations how those beginning teachers apply what they are learning in the methodology class to their own teaching. The GTAs in this study were thus able to combine the knowledge of both methodology instructors as well as the other students in their class and group to help them to formulate their own ideas about effective FL teaching. The observations not only benefited the observers who gained new ideas for teaching, but the GTAs being observed also benefited from the feedback they received from having group members observe how they integrate theory and practice. Because of the limited amount of time methodology teachers have with their students, these out-of-class discussions and observations facilitated learning beyond class contact hours, in addition to providing students with a forum in which to explore new theoretical and practical ideas, resulting in improved classroom teaching.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Online Discussion Questions**

#### *Topic 1: Writing*

Get to know the members of your group. What are important points to consider when teaching writing? What is the difference between writing for a product or as a process, and how do these concepts relate to FL teaching? What are some similarities and differences between speech and writing? What is the difference between writing as a support skill and writing as a creative activity? What are some ideas of writing activities that would help students write more cohesive and coherent discourse?

#### *Topic 2: Grammar*

You have now observed one of your group members teaching and have paid special attention to how s/he integrates grammar into the lesson. What are some challenges in regard to teaching grammar in a FL, and how can these challenges be overcome? What did you notice that the teacher you observed did really well, and what suggestions do you have for future grammar lessons? As a teacher who was observed, what questions do you have for your group members about teaching grammar or about your lesson?

#### *Topic 3: Listening and Reading*

For your second observation, you paid special attention to how your group member taught listening and/or reading. What are some suggestions you have for effective methods of teaching listening and reading? What are important points for an instructor to remember when teaching listening and reading? What did you notice that the teacher you observed did well, and what suggestions do you have for future listening or reading lessons? As a teacher who was observed, what questions do you have for your group members about teaching listening and/or reading or about your lesson?

#### *Topic 4: Speaking*

You have now completed your last observation of one of your group members. What kind of speaking activities did s/he incorporate into the lesson? What should a teacher remember when developing speaking tasks? What did you notice that the teacher you observed did well, and what suggestions do you have for future speaking lessons? As a teacher who was observed, what questions do you have for your group members about developing speaking tasks or about your lesson?

#### *Topic 5: Culture*

Current trends in foreign language pedagogy emphasize the importance of teaching culture. Why do you think it is considered important to incorporate culture

into a *language* class? What is the relationship between language and culture? How can culture be taught without sacrificing language instruction? What are potential problems that teachers might encounter when they teach culture? Can technology play a role in teaching culture?

**Appendix B**  
**Rubric Used to Evaluate On-line Discussions**

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>To be awarded maximum points for this category, you should:</i>	<i>Points Awarded (10 maximum)</i>
Theoretical Background Knowledge	Demonstrate a solid understanding of the theoretical issues associated with the topic.	
Connection between Theory & Topic	Make an explicit connection between theory and your experience/opinion/comment.	
Interactivity	Explicitly respond to your group members' postings and integrate them into your responses.	
Amount of Contributions	Be an active contributor to the discussion.	
Observation Discussion	Provide positive feedback to your group member about your observation and suggestions when applicable.	
	<b><i>Total Points</i></b>	

Note that the rubric was modified by deleting the component entitled "Observation Discussion" when the discussions were not based on peer observations.



# 8

## **Assessment and Assessment Design 1994-2004: An Annotated Bibliography**

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In 2004, on the eve of its 40th anniversary, the Southern Conference on Language Teaching (SCOLT) announced that it would publish an annotated bibliography of articles treating assessment published within the past 10 years. The Board of Directors invited contributions from SCOLT members familiar with this topic. What follows is a collection of those contributions.

**Adair-Hauck, B., & Pierce, M. (1996). Authentic assessment in second language learning. *Pennsylvania Language Forum*, 68, 10-30.**

This article describes an authentic assessment project developed at the Center for Western European Studies in conjunction with the University of Pittsburgh. For this project, Adair-Hauck was asked to identify four to five second language teachers who might be interested in forming a focus group to pilot-test some alternative assessment strategies. Five high school teachers from three school districts met regularly with Adair-Hauck to discuss problems, concerns, and solutions for integrating authentic assessment into classroom instruction. Results of these discussions and a number of assessment tools are presented.

**Adair-Hauck, B., & Pierce, M. (1998).** *Investigating the Simulated Oral Proficiency Interview (SOPI) as an assessment tool for second language oral proficiency.* *Pennsylvania Language Forum*, 68, 6-25.

This article shares the results of an action research project that focused on investigating the SOPI to assess oral proficiency for high school second language learners. Included in the appendix are other instruments used to gather information for the project: "Language Background Questionnaire," "Student Self-Assessment Questionnaire," "Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale," and "Student Open-Ended Affective Questionnaire on the SOPI."

**Allison, D. (1999).** *Language testing and evaluation: An introductory course.* Singapore: Singapore University Press.

In addition to a discussion of how to assess specific language skills, this book addresses larger areas, such as evaluating language curricula and professionalism in language teaching.

**Bailey, K. (1998).** *Learning about language assessment.* Boston: Heinle & Heinle.

This book provides a practical analysis of language assessment theory and accessible explanations of the statistics involved. It would be a good manual for prospective teacher candidates and graduate students in foreign language education or in ESL. It describes different kinds of language tests from cloze to role plays and discusses issues of design and grading. Bailey gives a simple but clear explanation of statistical procedures and includes teacher comments as to applicability in language classrooms.

**Barnhardt, S., Delett, J., & Kevorkian, J. (1999).** *The portfolio assessment manual for foreign language teachers.* Washington, DC: National Capital Language Resource Center.

This comprehensive manual for designing and implementing portfolio assessment in the foreign language classroom is the product of 3 years of collaboration between researchers and a team of pilot-test foreign language teachers. The 100-page manual includes a model for designing a reliable and valid portfolio assessment; guidelines for implementing portfolio assessment, including information on developing and scoring rating scales and rubrics; and more than 40 reproducible worksheets for teachers and students.

**Blaz, D. (2001)** *A collection of performance tasks and rubrics: Foreign languages.* Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education.

This is a collection of creative, effective strategies for assessing student performance in speaking, writing, reading, and listening in the foreign language classroom. The book includes rubrics, examples of student work, and explanations of scoring that work.

**Burke, K. (1994). *The mindful school: How to assess authentic learning*. Palatine, NY: IRI/Skylight.**

In this book, authentic assessment encompasses meaningful tasks, positive interaction between teachers and students, methods that emphasize higher-order thinking skills, and strategies that allow students to plan, monitor, and evaluate their own learning. The book covers a variety of assessment methods, such as standardized tests, portfolios, learning logs, journals, metacognition, observation checklists, interviews, and conferences. It also provides strategies to help students apply and transfer specific skills to real-life learning situations.

**Burke, K., Fogarty, R., & Belgrad, S. (1994). *The mindful school: The portfolio connection*. Palatine, NY: IRI/Skylight.**

This comprehensive resource takes a closer look at portfolios and provides teachers with creative suggestions for their use. A multitude of options for purposes and types of portfolios are discussed, as well as 10 strategies that are part of the portfolio system. Each chapter provides in-depth explanations of options and examples.

**Byrnes, H. (2002). The role of task and task-based assessment in a content-oriented collegiate foreign language curriculum. *Language Testing*, 19, 419-437.**

Byrnes's article describes the process of developing task-based writing assessments for a revamped German curriculum at Georgetown University. The German Department changed focus from a "language system-based and language form-based normative approach to a language-use and language-meaning orientation." Byrnes details the shift in educational culture by a faculty oriented to literary/cultural studies when a content-oriented, task-based curriculum was implemented. The process of writing task-based assessments enabled faculty to hone the articulation of thematic, content-oriented clusters and led to an enhanced knowledge base about the nature of second language acquisition, in particular, interlanguage development. Byrnes discusses how the department was motivated to make the assessment changes, how the faculty developed the writing tasks, and how the scoring process evolved. The article does not give specific examples of the curricular units or of the assessments. This would be of interest to college-level departments interested in issues of curriculum enhancement and of assessment.

**Center for Applied Linguistics. (2002). Computerized Oral Proficiency Instrument. Retrieved November 28, 2004, from <http://www.cal.org/projects/copi.html>**

This two-page article describes the Computerized Oral Proficiency Instrument (COPI) as the computerized version of the SOPI (Simulated Oral Proficiency Interview). It outlines the advantages of the COPI facilitated by technology and cites the goals, phases, and steps in taking the COPI. A bibliography and contact information to learn more about the COPI are referenced.



**Chaloub-Deville, M. (1997). The Minnesota articulation project and its proficiency-based assessments. *Foreign Language Annals*, 30, 492-502.**

This article describes the theoretical underpinnings of performance-based assessment for French, German, and Spanish in Minnesota. Descriptions and examples of speaking, writing, and reading assessments are provided. The appendix gives an overview of the characteristics and implications of proficiency-oriented language instruction and assessment.

**Choi, S., & Samimy, K. K. (2002). Exploring daily grading as a form of assessment in a college-level Japanese language classroom. *Foreign Language Annals*, 35, 25-32.**

This article explores the concept of a daily grading system as a form of assessment. Information is gathered by surveying teachers and students of Japanese regarding their beliefs about daily grading.

**Cohen, A. (1994). *Assessing language ability in the classroom* (2nd ed.). Boston: Heinle & Heinle.**

This book is especially useful for ideas relating to the assessment of reading and writing in a second language.

**Danielson, C., & Abrutyn, L. (1997). *An introduction to using portfolios in the classroom*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.**

This practical guide provides a useful resource for educators who would like to begin using portfolios in the classroom. In a concise format, the authors examine the many uses of portfolios and offer guidance on strategies to increase the effectiveness of this process in assessment and instruction.

**Connecticut State Board of Education. (1998). *World languages: A guide to K-12 program development*. Hartford: Connecticut State Board of Education.**

This exemplary program development guide outlines a vision for K-12 world language instruction in which performance assessment plays an integral part. The guide includes K-12 content standards, performance standards, prototype assessments, illustrative learning activities, and examples of student work.

**Delett, J., Barnhardt, S., & Kevorkian, J. (2001). A framework for portfolio assessment in the foreign language classroom. *Foreign Language Annals*, 34, 559-568.**

This article offers foreign language teachers a model for systematically designing and implementing assessment portfolios. It gives them a tool with which to conduct further research on the topic.

**Donato, R. (1998).** *Assessing foreign language ability of the early language learner.* In M. Met (Ed.), *Critical issues in early second language learning* (pp. 169-175). Glenview, IL: Addison-Wesley.

This article outlines the major basic issues in assessment of early language learners, including the what, how, when, for what purposes, and for whom.

**Eg ea-Kuehne, D. (2004).** *Student electronic portfolio assessment.* In C. M. Cherry & L. Bradley (Eds.), *Assessment practices in foreign language education: Dimension 2004* (pp. 19-28). Valdosta, GA: Southern Conference on Language Teaching.

This article discusses the need for traditional types of assessment, as well as the special problems inherent in assessing student progress in a second language over an extended period of time. The author discusses how electronic portfolios can overcome many of the limitations of more traditional types of assessment, and she offers valuable insight as to how to prepare high-quality portfolios.

**Flewelling, J. (2002).** *From language lab to multimedia lab: Oral language assessment in the new millennium.* In Cherry, C. M. (Ed.), *Cyberspace and foreign languages—Making the connection: Dimension 2002* (pp. 33-42). Valdosta, GA: Southern Conference on Language Teaching.

This article considers the strengths and weaknesses associated with traditional oral evaluation techniques and explores how oral assessment via computer may make assessing a student's oral proficiency more efficient and effective.

**Fogarty, R. (Ed.). (1996).** *Student portfolios: A collection of articles.* Palatine, NY: IRI/Skylight.

This collection answers commonly asked questions about portfolios. Articles by experienced practitioners offer support and practical advice for developing, implementing, and assessing a portfolio system. Articles cover all grade levels and subject areas and include topics such as electronic portfolios, student self-assessment, and explaining portfolio assessment to parents.

**Genesse, F., & Upshur, J. (1996).** *Classroom-based evaluation in second language education.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

The authors' aim is to develop teachers' evaluation skills so that they can improve second language teaching and learning in their classrooms. The book emphasizes four aspects of classroom-based evaluation: the purpose of evaluation, collecting information, interpreting information, and decision making. Part I focuses on the context of second language evaluation, on planning for evaluation, and on issues such as reliability, validity and practicality. Part II gives ideas for evaluating without tests by using techniques such as observation, journals, questionnaires, interviews and portfolios. Part III addresses evaluating with tests, including how to devise test tasks, how to assemble and score tests, and how to interpret data to inform instruction.

**Glatthorn, A., Bragaw, D., Dawkins, K., & Parker, J. (1998).** *Performance assessment and standards-based curricula: The achievement cycle.* Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education.

This practical volume demonstrates the essential connections between standards-based curricula, performance assessment, assessment-driven instruction, and authentic learning. Although the focus is on enabling teachers to use performance assessment more effectively in social studies, science, mathematics, and language arts, there is much here that is useful for the foreign language educator.

**Godev, C., Martínez-Gibson, E., & Toris, C. (2002).** Foreign language reading comprehension test: L1 versus L2 in open-ended questions. *Foreign Language Annals, 35*, 202-221.

This article examines differences in reading comprehension of college-level Spanish students, using various combinations of tests in both their first language and the target language.

**Grubbs, S. (2004)** The TPR test: Total physical response as an assessment tool. In C. M. Cherry & L. Bradley (Eds.), *Assessment practices in foreign language education: Dimension 2004* (pp. 43-52). Valdosta, GA: Southern Conference on Language Teaching.

This article reviews the history of Total Physical Response (TPR) as a tool for assessing language proficiency. The author convincingly describes how movement, storytelling, and demonstrations inherent in TPR can be used to assess complex linguistic structures.

**Guskey, T. (Ed.). (1996).** *Communicating student learning.* Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

This *ASCD Yearbook* is a comprehensive guide to communicating what elementary, middle, and secondary school students have learned and what they have accomplished. Experts in assessment and instruction describe new report cards and show how technology helps teachers report students' achievement to the students, parents, other teachers, and the community. Seventeen contributors show how to combine reports of standardized tests, performance-based assessments, and class grades, as well as how to accommodate gifted and special education students in fair, accurate reporting systems. The authors have collected and presented the latest and best reporting systems across the United States and Canada. Evaluation forms, checklists, assessment reports, teacher comments, and lists of achievement rubrics to help school personnel construct their own systems for communicating student learning are included.

**Haggstrom, M. (1994).** Using a video camera and task-based activities to make classroom oral testing a more realistic communicative experience. *Foreign Language Annals, 27*, 161-175.

This article provides an overview of popular methods of classroom oral testing, along with evaluations of their practicality and conformity to the goals of commu-

nicative teaching and testing. Also, video camera recording is addressed as a form of oral testing in the classroom.

**Hancock, C. (Ed.) (1994).** *Teaching, testing, and assessment: Making the connection. Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. Lincolnwood, IL: National Textbook.*

This book deals with aspects of establishing a relationship between the ways we teach, test, and assess foreign language students. The book consists of nine sections written by different authors, presenting a varied analysis of assessment in the foreign language classroom.

**Hoch, F. (1996).** *Assessment and outcomes in the high school foreign language curriculum.* In R. Klein & S. Slick (Eds.), *Managing the high school foreign language department* (pp. 41-48). Lincolnwood, IL: National Textbook.

This article contains a list of assessment strategies to be considered in the assessments of high school language learners.

**Hughes, A. (2003).** *Testing language for teachers* (2nd ed.). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

In addition to addressing general issues such as test validity and test writing, this book contains useful chapters on testing specific skills and grammar, as well as ideas for tests for early language learners.

**Illinois State Board of Education Assessment Division. (1998).** *The language proficiency handbook: A practitioner's guide to instructional assessment.* Springfield, IL: Illinois State Department of Education.

This remarkable handbook is ideal for second language educators, regardless of the language they teach. It is organized around a series of rubrics designed as documentation forms for a variety of types of assessment. Through examples and thoughtful discussion, this publication serves as a guide for capturing students' language proficiency in reliable and valid ways by using instructional assessment activities.

**Jackson, C. W. (Ed.). (1999).** *A challenge to change: The language learning continuum.* New York: The College Board.

As an outcome of the earlier (1996) foreign language learning study, *Articulation and Achievement*, project participants developed the "Language Learning Curriculum," a descriptive model that offers a flexible and practical approach to student achievement. This model sets high standards, is performance based, and identifies the performance characteristics of each stage of language learning. The volume includes essays on standards and assessments and the Language Learning Continuum, plus appendices of sample writings, activities, and assessments.

**Johnson, B. (1996).** *The performance assessment handbook. Vol. 1: Portfolios and Socratic seminars; Vol. 2: Performances and exhibitions.* Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education.

This two-volume paperback series is filled with examples and detailed commentaries from real classrooms. It displays student handouts, evaluation sheets, and other forms used by successful teachers from across the country and shows how performance assessment has improved teaching and learning.

**Kenyon, D., & Malabonga, V. (May 2001).** Comparing examinee attitudes toward computer-assisted and other oral proficiency assessments. *Language Learning & Technology, 5*, 60-83.

This study reports results of examinee reactions to participating in different formats of oral proficiency assessments—ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI), Computerized Oral Proficiency Instrument (COPI), and the Simulated Oral Proficiency Interview (SOPI)—in three languages: Arabic, Chinese, and Spanish. Results were collected via questionnaires and report differences in attitudes between the technology-mediated tests and the face-to-face assessment.

**Kuo, J., & Jiang, X. (1997).** Assessing the assessments: The OPI and SOPI. *Foreign Language Annals, 30*, 503-512.

This article provides an overview and comparison of the Oral Proficiency Interview and the Simulated Oral Proficiency Interview. Advantages and disadvantages of both tests are given.

**Lafayette, R. C. (Ed.). (1996).** *National standards: A catalyst for reform.* American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. Lincolnwood, IL: National Textbook.

The volume focuses on the National Standards for Foreign Language Learning in general. However, almost all chapters include a section on assessment research and development as part of the reform movement. A key chapter by Judith Liskin-Gasparro, "Assessment: From Content Standards to Student Performance," addresses assessment exclusively and provides a concrete argument with examples for a strong connection between the philosophy of the standards and evaluation.

**Lee, L. (2000).** Evaluating intermediate Spanish students' speaking skills through a taped test: A pilot study. *Hispania, 83*, 127-138.

This article shows a pilot study that used the Spanish Oral Proficiency Test (SOPT) to evaluate students of intermediate Spanish. The study also examines what variables affect the development of students' oral skills.

**Lipton, G. (1996).** Factors for success in K-12 foreign language programs: A checklist. In R. Klein & S. Slick (Eds.), *Managing the high school foreign language department* (pp. 213-216). Lincolnwood, IL: National Textbook.

This checklist offers numerous criteria to be considered in the assessment of high school foreign language programs, including access, articulation, assessment, instruction, and so forth.

**Lipton, G. (2004).** *Practical handbook to elementary foreign language programs (FLES\*)* (4th ed.). Kensington, MD: Blueprints for Learning.

This book contains valuable information about assessment at this level. Particularly helpful are the FLES\* Evaluation Scale, an instrument for program evaluation (p. 407), and the FLES\* Assessment Design (p. 334).

**Malone, M. (2000).** **Simulated oral proficiency interviews: Recent developments.** ERIC Digest No. EDO-FL-00-14. Retrieved November 28, 2004, from <http://www.cal.org/ericcll/DIGEST>

The article gives a clear overview of the Simulated Oral Proficiency Interview (SOPI). It defines the performance-based, tape-mediated speaking test and compares it to the face-to-face OPI. This study cites several language testing examples where both the SOPI and OPI were administered. The article concludes with a brief description of the more recently developed Computerized Oral Proficiency Interview (COPI).

**Mantero, M. (2004).** **Accounting for activity: Cognition and oral proficiency assessment.** In C. M. Cherry & L. Bradley (Eds.), *Assessment practices in foreign language education: Dimension 2004* (pp. 67-83). Valdosta, GA: Southern Conference on Language Teaching.

The article points out some of the limitations inherent in using the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) to assess language proficiency. Mantero makes the case that often overlooked are the speaker's cognitive ability to utilize language through translation, interpretation, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

**Marcos, K. M. (2000).** **The foreign language national assessment of educational progress (FL NAEP): Questions and answers.** In ERIC/CLL Language Link: An online newsletter from the ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics. October 2000. Retrieved November 28, 2004, from <http://www.cal.org/ericcll/langlink/1000.html>

This article explains the mandate, rationale, and plan for the Foreign Language National Assessment of Educational Progress (FL NAEP). Framework development and assessment areas are identified. Included is a select bibliography to direct interested parties to background and contact information about agencies involved in FL NAEP testing.

**McClendon, L. (2004).** **No child left behind in foreign language education.** In C. M. Cherry & L. Bradley (Eds.), *Assessment practices in foreign language education: Dimension 2004* (pp. 1-8). Valdosta, GA: Southern Conference on Language Teaching.

This article examines criteria used to assess teacher preparation and certification of institutions preparing teachers for licensure. McClendon explains many of the terms, standards, and guidelines currently in use as they apply to assessing foreign language teaching, learners, and teachers, most notably the requirements of the "No Child Left Behind" legislation.

**Montas, M. (Fall 2003). Observing achievement of beginning students in a fourth-grade Spanish FLES program. *Learning Languages*, 9, 8-19.**

This article describes in great detail the ways in which student progress may be evaluated.

**Moore, Z. (1994). The portfolio in testing culture. In C. Hancock (Ed.), *Teaching, testing, and assessment: Making the connection* (pp. 163-182). Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. Lincolnwood, IL: National Textbook.**

This article focuses on assessing culture in general and advocates the use of portfolio assessment in keeping with the teaching of culture as a process. Included are a literature review of three decades of research on testing culture, an overview of the movement toward portfolio assessment, a definition of the portfolio, and a summary of the implementation of portfolio assessment and culture learning. Also found in the article are useful tools, such as a chart titled "12 Steps in Implementing a Class Portfolio," samples of items in a culture portfolio, appendices with rubrics for evaluation, and a project outline.

**National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project. (1999). Standards for foreign language learning in the 21st century. Yonkers, NY: Author.**

The collaborative work of countless individuals and language organizations committed to the profession, this is unquestionably one of the most important documents on foreign language assessment published in recent memory. The text explains the Standards for Foreign Language Learning and offers models of programs from elementary schools to post-secondary institutions. Also included are sample learning scenarios, standards, and assessment tools for nine different languages.

**Norris, J., Brown, J., Hudson, T., & Yoshioka, J. (1998). *Designing second language performance assessments*. Honolulu, HI: Second Language Teaching & Curriculum Center.**

This book contains chapters related to performance assessment, as well as task-based language teaching and assessment.

**O'Loughlin, K. (2001). The equivalence of direct and semi-direct speaking tests. In M. Milanovic & C. Weir (Eds.), *Studies in language testing, vol 13*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.**

The entire volume is devoted to the comparison of direct (face-to-face) and semi-direct (audio-taped) oral proficiency interviews. Detailed descriptions and data are given for several series of tests during the study. O'Loughlin concludes that the two tests are not equivalent because they test two different proficiency constructs: the semi-direct test elicits monologic speaking ability with greater lexical density, while the direct test elicits interactive speaking proficiency dependent on the quality of interaction between the candidate and the interlocutor.

**Paulus, L. (2000). Watch them SOAR: Student oral assessment redefined. *Hispania*, 81, 146-152.**

This article describes a competence assessment model that facilitates an immersion classroom and makes language learning more meaningful. The approach to oral assessment involves three domains: strategic, sociolinguistic, and discourse competences.

**Perrone, V. (1991). *Expanding student assessment*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.**

The contributors to this book challenge test makers, teachers, curriculum developers, principals, and even students to question themselves about their educational goals and to then develop assessment methods that support these goals. The contributors describe their own efforts as educators to find better ways to assess student learning and improve instruction.

**Rennie, J. (1998). Current trends in foreign language assessment. *The ERIC Review*, 6, 27-30.**

The article contains a concise, general overview of assessment trends and practices in foreign languages since the early 1980s. There is a synopsis of assessment trends from discrete point to performance based. Other useful sections include a discussion of the proficiency movement and its impact, a one-page chart listing traditional assessments and suggesting alternative assessment methods, and a "Preliminary Assessment Checklist."

**Robinson, D. (1998). Celebrating the successes of FLES\* through evaluation. In G. Lipton (Ed.), *A celebration of FLES\** (pp. 193-205). Lincolnwood, IL: National Textbook.**

This article outlines the basics for a cogent evaluation of student progress, teacher evaluation, and program evaluation

**Schrier, L. L., & Hammadou, U. (1994). Assessment in foreign language teacher education. In C. Hancock (Ed.), *Teaching, testing, and assessment: Making the connection* (pp. 211-234). Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. Lincolnwood, IL: National Textbook.**

The purpose of the chapter is to give an overview of the most recent assessment instruments (language competence exams based on language-specific standards) to evaluate teachers and argue the benefits of portfolio assessment for pre-service foreign language teachers. Authors connect the construct of good teaching to portfolio practice. There is a useful schematic on portfolio product, process, and program in a section under "operational features." A helpful analysis on challenges in portfolio assessment is also included.



**Schwarzer, D. (2003). A qualitative assessment of a foreign language whole language class. *Foreign Language Annals*, 36, 77-85.**

This study provides insights on how to assess a Whole-Language Foreign Language Class (WLFLC). It also field tests qualitative research methods. The class studied was assessed through the analysis of formal, semi-structured interviews; student's reflective midterm papers and final class evaluations (from their portfolios); and the teacher/researcher's reflective journal.

**Stansfield, C. (1996). *Test development handbook: Simulated Oral Proficiency Interview (SOPI)*. Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics.**

In recognition of the importance of Simulated Oral Proficiency Interviews (SOPIs) in meeting the needs of foreign language educators, this book was funded by a grant from the Office of International Research and Studies of the U.S. Department of Education. After briefly outlining the historical context of the SOPI and describing its components, the handbook gives step-by-step guidelines and examples of development, trial, and operation of a SOPI.

**Storme, J., & Derakhshani, M. (2002). Defining, teaching, and evaluating cultural proficiency in the foreign language classroom. *Foreign Language Annals*, 35, 657- 668.**

The authors of this article consider recent work that has moved the profession closer to a broadly embraced, but clear definition of cultural proficiency and propose a model for culture teaching that responds to this definition. They focus especially on evaluation, that is, classroom testing and proficiency assessment, the latter extending beyond the confines of a single course.

**Tedick, D. (Ed.). (1998). *Proficiency-oriented language instruction and assessment: A curriculum handbook for teachers*. Minneapolis, MN: Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA).**

This handbook provides teachers with reasons, ideas, and resources for rethinking curriculum and instruction with an eye toward enhancing students' language proficiency levels. It provides a framework for considering different ways of planning curriculum and instruction to correspond to a standards-based model. This initiative is accomplished by previewing the directions in which the field is headed, explaining some of the theory about language learning and teaching, describing ways to assess language proficiency through performance-based measures, providing illustrations of the connection between theory and practice, and presenting an extensive list of resources to enhance curriculum and instruction.

**Thompson, L. (1997). *Foreign language assessment in grades K-8: An annotated bibliography of assessment instruments*. McHenry, IL: Delta Systems.**

This resource describes approximately 160 foreign language assessment instruments currently in use in elementary and middle schools across the country, as well as some high school assessments. It also provides a wealth of resources related to

foreign language assessment, including descriptions of books, articles, and internet resources for teachers of grades K-12.

**Underhill, N. (2002).** *Testing spoken language: A handbook of oral testing techniques*, (16th ed.). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

This volume addresses the assessment of spoken language, summarizing test types, elicitation techniques, and grading issues, including weighting.

**Valette, R. (1998).** Using class quizzes to promote the linguistic accuracy of younger learners. In G. Lipton (Ed.), *A celebration of FLES\** (pp. 168-174). Lincolnwood, IL: National Textbook.

This article provides specific guidelines for teaching and testing accuracy in young learners' use of the target language.

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

A rationale for learning-centered assessment in our schools and an overview of the tools, techniques, and issues that educators should consider as they design and use assessments focused on learner needs are presented. Wiggins argues for a kind of student assessment different from the one most schools currently use. The assessments described here are deliberately designed to improve and educate student performance and are anchored in authentic tasks that provide students and teachers with feedback and opportunities they can readily use to revise their performance on these or similar tasks. Numerous sample assessment instruments that illustrate this approach are found throughout this volume.

**Wilkerson, C., Schomber, J., & Sandarg, J. (2004).** Assessing readiness of foreign language education majors to take the Praxis II Exam. In C. M. Cherry & L. Bradley (Eds.), *Assessment practices in foreign language education: Dimension 2004* (pp. 29-41). Valdosta, GA: Southern Conference on Language Teaching.

The authors offer strategies to assess the language proficiency of teacher candidates prior to taking the Praxis II Exam, required for licensure in most Southeastern states. Strategies are given to assess students' oral proficiency, cultural knowledge, listening, reading, and writing skills. Additionally, the authors offer suggestions for assessing the programs that prepare teachers.

**Zimmer-Loew, H. (1997).** *German language assessments: A bibliography*. Cherry Hill, NJ: American Association of Teachers of German.

This bibliography includes profiles of 46 tests that were reviewed by a task force of assessment experts in 1997. A unique feature of each assessment instrument profiled is a focus on the national foreign language learning standards. This survey reveals that most professionally designed tests used at the state and national levels tend to emphasize validity and efficiency over reliability.





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