# NECTFL
# *REVIEW*

**A Journal for K – 16+
Foreign Language Educators**



**Northeast Conference
on the Teaching of Foreign Languages**

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# DEVELOPING LEADERS FOR TOMORROW'S LEARNERS
## In World Languages and ESOL

*The 60th Annual Northeast Conference*
*March 7-10, 2013 in Baltimore, MD*

Arlene F. White, Salisbury University, Conference Chair

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**NORTHEAST CONFERENCE**
on the Teaching of Foreign Languages

## *From the 2013 Chair*

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

As Conference Chair for 2013, it will be my privilege and honor to welcome you once again to the Baltimore Marriott Waterfront Hotel, site of this year's 60th anniversary conference. I hope that you will be able to join our Diamond Jubilee celebration!

The conference theme for 2013, "Developing Leaders for Tomorrow's Learners," will function as the organizing principle.

We will again have our pre-conference workshops on Thursday with a repeat of our FREE welcome dinner with the opportunity to meet the NECTFL Board, presenters, and award winners.

Our exhibit hall will again be full of the latest and best materials that the profession has to offer.

Come and bid on a wide selection of items in our Second Annual Silent Auction.

Contribute to our Wall of Recognition and honor someone who greatly contributed to and inspired your growth as a professional.

This year we will offer both pre- and post-conference webinars based on the following sub-themes: Supporting the Professional: Leadership through Research, Resources and Relationships; Exemplary Practices to Support Enhanced Student Achievement and Beyond the Classroom Walls — Language Learning through Curricular and Cultural Connections. Our new *individual* memberships will allow you to participate in 3 webinars for free this year! Our webinar presenters, as many of our conference presenters, are leaders in the field who respond to concerns **you** express and answer questions **you** raise. This year, your professional development and networking experiences can be greatly extended throughout the year.

We all have the opportunity and the obligation to continue our professional development that will allow us to become the teacher leader our students need. **What better place to make that happen than the Northeast Conference!** *Here* you have access to experts who are willing and able to share their ideas and strategies. *Here* you will be inspired by those who are on the cutting edge of technology, who can explain how to put theory into practice, and who can and will become important resources for you. *Here* you will learn how to innovate and become empowered to make a significant different with your students and colleagues. *Here* you can make connections and collaborate with teachers in your town, your state, or this region in order to enhance and strengthen your expertise.

This priceless investment in self, particularly during these difficult times, will be worth every penny. The benefits are many! Anyone who has ever attended this conference will tell you that they come away with a renewed spirit and commitment to the profession, with boundless energy to implement new ideas and instructional strategies that make their students say "WOW! Where have you been this past weekend? Class was awesome today!" These experiences allow us to develop as the leaders for tomorrow's learners upon whose shoulders rest the future of the world — what a humbling and challenging responsibility to have!

Best wishes for the beginning of the academic year. All of the NECTFL Board of Directors hope to see you in Baltimore, also known as "Charm City," and to have NECTFL work its charms on your professional development as a leader for tomorrow's learners. **Circle the dates on your calendar now — March 7–10, 2013!** E-mail us at **nectfl@dickinson.edu** if you wish additional information and visit our website at **www.nectfl.org** for conference updates.

Sincerely,


Arlene White
Salisbury University (MD)
2013 Conference Chair

# *From the Managing Editor*  ━━━━━━━━━━

Faithful Readers,

Welcome to the fifth online issue of the *NECTFL Review* and a new series of quality of articles. You can read these articles online,  or download individual articles and the entire publication in PDF format [**http://www.nectfl.org/review.html**]. You will also find a collection of materials reviews and information about NECTFL and the 2013 annual conference.

As we announced in the 2012 January issue of the NECTFL *Review,* the journal is now included in the EBSCOhost service. EBSCO offers libraries and other institution more than 375 full-text and secondary research databases through **EBSCOhost®**. EBSCO's content services the research needs of tens of thousands of customers representing millions of end users from K-12 students to public library patrons, from academic, corporate and medical researchers to clinicians and governments around the world. In addition, the NECTFL *Review* now also has ISSN numbers from the Library of Congress: ISSN 2164-5957 for our earlier print journals, and ISSN 2164-5965 for our new online format. This is indeed exciting news since being included in EBSCO will help spread the quality articles and reviews that appear twice a year in our journal.

In this latest issue of the NECTFL *Review* — September 2012 — you will find three excellent articles. The first, "Teaching students with disabilities: Addressing the needs of adjunct and temporary faculty," by Wade Edwards and Sally Scott, addresses two significant areas of foreign language teaching: the growing presence of students with disabilities in higher education and those who enroll in foreign language classes, and the role of adjunct and other contingent (non-tenure-track) faculty who most often work outside the mainstream of the university, but who nonetheless need support in how to teach this expanding group of diverse learners. The authors have developed a program called LINC — Learning in Inclusive Classrooms — which is a web-based resource to teach part-time and temporary faculty about the needs of language students with disabilities.

The second article, by Jennifer D. Ewald, is entitled "Student-teacher dialogue journals: Students' concerns about Spanish 101." In this article, Ewald explores a large number of student dialogue journals gathered over seven semesters in order to identify and describe the particular concerns these students had about their experiences in Spanish 101. She includes how these students expressed their concerns, and reveals her own comments on their concerns, concluding with 16 suggestions for teacher responses.
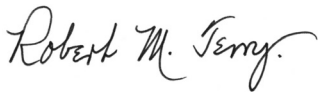
Finally, in "Using research to design advanced grammar courses: A case study in Spanish," Jane E. Berne shifts the typical foreign language focus from beginning and intermediate language learners to the advanced levels of proficiency. Rather than examining the development of overall proficiency in a given language, Berne focuses upper levels in which the emphasis is on specific content areas...in this case, grammar. Berne examines and reviews numerous approaches to teaching grammar that have appeared in recent literature, and then describes her own advanced grammar course.

The 2013 NECTFL annual meeting, with the theme "Developing Leaders for Tomorrow's Learners," is again being held in Baltimore, MD, at the Baltimore Marriott Waterfront Hotel on March 7–10, 2013. Note that the conference is significantly earlier and returns to a Thursday through Sunday schedule. On pages 4–5 of this issue there is a letter from the Chair of the 2013 Conference, Arlene White.

We invite you to visit the **NECTFL website** and see what the organization is about and what it is doing. Also, please end me an **e-mail** and let me know what you think of the journal — the articles, the reviews…whatever you would like for me to know and whatever you might want to see changed.

Cordially,

Robert M. Terry
Managing Editor

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## Call for Articles

The NECTFL *Review* encourages articles of interest to instructors, researchers, and administrators at all educational levels on theory, research, and classroom practice in language teaching. Articles dealing with pedagogical strategies, materials and curriculum development, language teaching technology, the teaching of literature, assessment, community awareness projects, and international studies would be equally welcome; the foregoing list illustrates the range of concerns that might be addressed in submissions. We welcome manuscripts from teachers at all levels, pre-K through university, and from teacher educators.

# Guidelines for Preparation of Manuscripts

All articles submitted will be evaluated by at least two, normally three, members of the Editorial Review Board. Elements to be considered in the evaluation process are the article's appropriateness for the journal's readership, its contribution to foreign language education and the originality of that contribution, the soundness of the research or theoretical base, its implications for the classroom, and finally, organization, focus, and clarity of expression.

As you prepare your manuscript for submission to the NECTFL *Review*, please keep the following guidelines in mind:

1.  We use the most recent **APA [American Psychological Association] Guidelines**, and not those of the Modern Language Association (MLA) or the *Chicago Manual of Style*. Please use the latest edition (6th ed., 2010) of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* or the *Concise Rules of APA Style* as your guide. For models of articles and references, examine The NECTFL *Review*, recent issues of the *Modern Language Journal* or *Foreign Language Annals*. These journals follow the APA style with minor deviations (and those being primarily changes in level headings within articles). Citations within articles, bibliographical entries, punctuation, and style follow the APA format very closely. You can visit the following web sites, which give you abbreviated versions of the APA guidelines:
    a.  APA Formatting and Style Guide: **http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/** — this excellent site offers guidelines for using the 6th edition of the APA guidelines.
    b.  APA 6th Edition, Wake Forest University: **http://zsr.wfu.edu/research/guides/apa.html**
    c.  APA — **http://www.apastyle.org/**. This is the very source...the APA, with all sorts of help and assistance.
    d.  Writer Resources: APA: **http://www.cws.illinois.edu/workshop/writers/citation/apa/** — this is yet another great site from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign to guide you through the APA style.
    e.  APA Style Essentials: **http://psychology.vanguard.edu/faculty/douglas-degelman/apa-style/** — this handy reference guide based on the APA sixth edition comes from the Vanguard University of Southern California.
    f.  APA Reference Style Guide: **http://library.nmu.edu/guides/userguides/style_apa.htm** — this site from Northern Michigan University offers a quick overview of styles from the APA sixth edition.
2.  Submit your article electronically to **rterry@richmond.edu**. Please follow these guidelines carefully to expedite the review and publishing process. Note: In order for an article to be processed and sent to outside reviewers, authors must complete the online **Author/Article Information form**.
    a.  Use a PC- or Mac-compatible word-processing program —Microsoft Word 2007 or 2010 for PC; 2008 or 2011 for Mac. You can save your file as either .doc or .docx.
    b.  Do not use the rich text format.
    c.  Use Times New Roman 12-point or Minion Pro 12-point and only that one font throughout.
    d.  Use italics and boldface type when necessary, but do not use underlining.

3.  Please think carefully about the title of your article. Although "catchy" titles are permissible, even desirable in some cases for conference presentations, the title of your article should be more academic in nature, allowing the reader to determine at once what subject the author(s) will be addressing. It should be brief, preferably without subtitles, and ***no longer than 12 words***.

4.  **We require an abstract of your article.** See pp. 25-25 [Section 2.04] in *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (2010) for clears guidelines for writing an abstract.

5.  Articles will not be accepted if they appear to endorse or sell software, hardware, books, or any other products.

6.  **Do not include the names of the author(s) of the article on the first page of the actual text.**
    a.  On the first page of the submitted article, authors should provide the following information:
        i.    The title of the article
        ii.   Names and titles of the author(s)
        iii.  Preferred mailing addresses
        iv.   Home and office phone numbers
        v.    E-mail addresses
        vi.   For joint authorship, an indication as to which author will be the primary contact person (not necessarily the first author listed on the manuscript itself).
    b.  The first page of the manuscript itself should have the title only, followed by the abstract, then the text.
    c.  It is essential that there be no direct references to the author(s) in the manuscript to be read by the reviewers. Any "giveaways," such as references to a particular institution, when it is obvious that the institution is that of the author, should be avoided as well.
    d.  If your article is accepted for publication, you will be able to make the necessary changes in the final manuscript. For the present, however, authors should refer to themselves in the third person as "the author(s)" and refer to studies or projects at "X Middle School" or "X University."
    e.  The APA guidelines suggest ways that authors can achieve this necessary degree of anonymity. We do understand, however, that references to certain websites may necessarily reveal the identity of the authors of certain articles.

7.  Include a short biographical paragraph (this will appear at the bottom of the first page of the article, should it be published). Please include this paragraph on a separate page at the *end* of the article. This paragraph should include the following information (***no longer than 4-5 lines***):
    a.  Your name
    b.  Your highest degree and what school it is from
    c.  Your title
    d.  If you are a teacher, indicate what level(s) you have taught in your teaching career: K-12, elementary school, middle school, high school, community college, college/ university, other.

e. Your credentials.

Example:

**Charles Bovary** (Ph.D., Duke University) is Professor of French and Foreign Language Pedagogy at the University of Montana. He teaches/coordinates …. His research …. He has published ….

8. Please note that the typical length of manuscripts averages approximately 20-25 double-spaced pages, including notes, charts, and references. This does not mean that a slightly longer article is out of the question.

9. Authors should read the manuscript very carefully before submitting it, verifying the accuracy of the citations (including the spelling of names, page numbers, and publication dates); the accuracy of the format of the references; punctuation, according to the APA Guidelines; spelling throughout the article.

10. Please consult the **Checklist for Manuscript Publication**. Promising articles have been rejected because authors did not spend enough time proofreading the manuscript. Proofreading includes not only reading for accuracy but for readability, flow, clarity. Using the Checklist will help ensure accuracy. Authors are encouraged to have several colleagues read the article before it is submitted. Whether you are a native speaker of English or not, please ask a colleague whose native language is English to proofread your article to be sure that the text sounds idiomatic and that punctuation and spelling are standard.

11. In order for an article to be processed and sent to outside reviewers, authors must complete the online **Author/Article Information form**. This form is used to match the author's description of the article with the appropriate reviewers according to (1) instructional level; (2) areas of interest; (3) the type of content; (4) relevant language(s); (5) keywords that best describe the article content [no more than four should be indicated].

## Checklist for Manuscript Preparation

Here are a few reminders, many of which are taken directly from the APA Guidelines:

❑ Please remember to use the spell check and grammar check on your computer before you submit your manuscript. Whether you are a native speaker of English or not, please ask a colleague whose native language is English to proofread your article to be sure that the text sounds idiomatic and that punctuation and spelling are standard. Otherwise good articles have been rejected because the writing style has very obvious non-native features and elements that detract from the message.

❑ Any portions of text in a foreign language must be followed immediately by an English translation in square brackets.

❑ Do not submit an article that includes tracking. If tracking has been used in the writing of the article, verify that every change indicated in tracking has been accepted or rejected and that the tracking box and any marks in the margin have been deleted.

❑ Remember that in the APA guidelines, notes (footnotes or endnotes) are discouraged — such information is considered to be either important enough to be in-

cluded in the article itself or not significant enough to be placed anywhere. If notes are necessary, however, they should be endnotes.

❑ Do not use automatic footnoting or endnoting available with your word processor. Use raised superscripts in the body of the text and regular Arabic numerals in the notes at the end. Automatic endnotes/footnotes present major problems as an article is prepared for publication.

❑ Do not use automatic page numbering, since such numbering is often difficult to remove from a manuscript and has to be removed before the article is prepared for eventual publication.

❑ Please double-space everything in your manuscript.

❑ Use left justification only; do not use full justification anywhere in the article.

❑ The required font throughout is either Times New Roman 12 pt. or Minion Pro 12 pt.

❑ There should be only one space after each period.

❑ Punctuation marks appear inside quotation marks. Quotation marks, question marks, and exclamation points appear inside the quotation marks only when they are part of the actual quoted material. Otherwise, they should appear outside of the quoted material (as, for instance, when the author of the article is asking a question or reacting strongly to something).

❑ In listing items or in a series of words connected by *and, but, or*, use a comma before these conjunctions.

❑ When providing a list of items, use double parentheses surrounding the numbers or letters: (1), (2), or (3) or  (a), (b), and (c).

❑ All numbers above nine must appear as Arabic numerals ["nine school districts" vs. "10 textbooks"]; numbers below 10 must be written out.

❑ Please remember that page number references in parentheses are not part of the actual quotation and must be placed outside of the quotation marks following quoted material.

❑ Use standard postal abbreviations for states in all reference items [e.g., NC, IL, NY, MS], but not in the text itself.

❑ Please do not set up automatic tabs at the beginning of the article (i.e., as part of a style); rather you should use the tab key (and not the space bar) on your computer each time you begin a new paragraph. The standard indent is only ¼ [0.25"] inch.

❑ Please note the differences between the use and appearance of hyphens and dashes. Dashes (which should be used sparingly) should appear as the correct typographic symbol (—) or as two hyphens (--). If your computer automatically converts two hyphens to a dash, that is fine. APA guidelines, as well as those for other style manuals, suggest that commas, parentheses, and other marks of punctuation are generally more effective than dashes.

❑ Please observe APA guidelines with respect to the use of initials instead of the first and middle names of authors cited in your list of references. Also note the use of the ampersand (&) instead of "and" to cover joint ownership in both parenthetical and bibliographical references. Use "and," however, to refer to joint authorship in the body of your article.

❑ Please reflect on the title of the article. Quite often titles do not give readers the most precise idea of what they will be reading.

❑ Please remember that according to APA guidelines, the References section does not consist of a list of works consulted, but rather of the list of works you actually use in your article. Before you submit your manuscript, verify that each reference in the article has a matching citation in the References section. Then be sure that all items in the References section have been cited within the article itself. In unusual circumstances, authors may include as an appendix a separate selected bibliography of items useful to readers, but not among the sources cited in an article. Please double check all Internet addresses before you submit the manuscript.

❑ Be judicious in using text or graphic boxes or tables in your text. Remember that your manuscript will have to be reformatted to fit the size of the published volume. Therefore, a table with lines and boxes that you set up so carefully in your 8 ½" × 11" manuscript page will not usually fit on our journal pages.

❑ Please makes certain that the components you submit are in the following order:
  ❑ First page — with the article title, names and titles of authors, their preferred mailing addresses, home and office phone numbers, FAX numbers, E-mail addresses, and an indication as to which of the joint authors will serve as the primary contact person [also, times in the summer when regular and E-mail addresses may be inactive];
  ❑ First page of the manuscript — containing the title of the article and the abstract
  ❑ The text of the article
  ❑ Notes; References, Appendices — in this order
  ❑ The short, biographical paragraph (no more than 4-5 lines).

❑ Authors must complete the online **Author/Article Information form**. This form is used to match the author's description of the article with the appropriate reviewers according to (1) instructional level; (2) areas of interest; (3) the type of content; (4) relevant language(s); (5) keywords that best describe the article content [no more than four should be indicated].

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# Call for Articles

The NECTFL *Review* encourages articles of interest to instructors, researchers, and administrators at all educational levels on theory, research, and classroom practice in language teaching. Articles dealing with pedagogical strategies, materials and curriculum development, language teaching technology, the teaching of literature, assessment, community awareness projects, and international studies would be equally welcome; the foregoing list illustrates the range of concerns that might be addressed in submissions. We welcome manuscripts from teachers at all levels, pre-K through university, and from teacher educators.

# The NECTFL Editorial Review Board ─────────

Our sincere gratitude to the following individuals who have agreed to serve as reviewers of manuscripts submitted for publication in the NECTFL *Review.* We cannot fulfill our mission without them!

# Teaching students with disabilities: Addressing the needs of adjunct and temporary faculty

Wade Edwards, *Longwood University*
Sally Scott, *University of Mary Washington*

## Abstract

The growing presence of students with disabilities in higher education has been well documented. As more and more students with disabilities enroll in postsecondary foreign language classes, similarly growing numbers of adjunct instructors and other contingent, or non-tenure-track, faculty—knowledgeable in foreign language instruction but working outside the mainstream of the university—are in need of support to teach this influx of diverse learners. This paper examines the development and outcomes of Project LINC (Learning in Inclusive Classrooms), a Web resource that provides faculty development modules for part-time and temporary faculty interested in the learning needs of foreign language students with disabilities. The authors found that providing opportunities for instructors to talk about the challenges of teaching, while encouraging collaboration between campus disability offices and senior faculty, contributed to a viable and sustainable approach to supporting part-time and temporary instructors in providing inclusive foreign language learning experiences.

The growing presence of students with disabilities in higher education has been well documented. National data indicate approximately 11% of college students self-disclose as having a disability. This number has increased four-fold

**Wade Edwards** (Ph.D., University of Virginia) is Associate Professor of French at Longwood University where he serves as coordinator of the modern languages program. In addition to intermediate French, he teaches courses in gender studies, film, literature, and ESL. His research has appeared in such journals as *Nineteenth-Century French Studies* and *Feminist Teacher*.

**Sally S. Scott** (Ph.D., University of Virginia) is the Director of Disability Resources and Associate Professor of Education at the University of Mary Washington, where she teaches graduate courses in special education. Her research has appeared in such journals as the *Journal of Learning Disabilities* and the *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability*.

> *... students with disabilities are found on all types of college campuses—public, private, two-year, four-year, for-profit, and not-for-profit.*

in the decades since the publication of the first national survey examining this student demographic in 1978 (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2009). A recent report from the National Center for Education Statistics (Raue & Lewis, 2011) also confirms that students with disabilities are found on all types of college campuses—public, private, two-year, four-year, for-profit, and not-for-profit. Eighty-eight percent of two- and four-year degree granting postsecondary institutions report enrollment of students with disabilities. For public two- and four-year campuses, the frequency of students who report disabilities rises to 99%. The largest group of students with disabilities includes individuals with learning disabilities (31%), followed by attention deficit disorder (18%), psychological diagnoses (15%), and chronic health impairment (11%) (Raue & Lewis, 2011).

## Disabilities and Foreign Language Learning

Research in the area of foreign language learning and students with disabilities has predominantly focused on the performance of students with learning disabilities

> *Difficulties in the areas of phonological/ orthographic processing, syntactic and semantic knowledge, and expressive or receptive oral and written language that are characteristic of many language-based learning disabilities create challenges for students in foreign language classrooms.*

(LD). Decades of clinical observation and research have shown that some students with LD experience inordinate difficulty in foreign language learning. While the early conception of a "foreign language learning disability" has been not been sustained by research (Sparks, 2009), an extensive body of work conducted by Sparks, Ganschow, and colleagues has documented the intuitive notion that individuals who have difficulty in native language skills will likely experience difficulty in learning a second language. (See Ganschow & Sparks, 2000 for a summary of this research.) Difficulties in the areas of phonological/orthographic processing, syntactic and semantic knowledge, and expressive or receptive oral and written language that are characteristic of many language-based learning disabilities create challenges for students in foreign language classrooms (Leons, Herbert, & Gobbo, 2009). Difficulties in these areas of information processing are often manifested in the classroom through deficient performance in the achievement areas of reading, spelling, vocabulary, phonological awareness, and listening comprehension—typical areas of early and persisting difficulty for students with dyslexia, a form of learning disability (Sparks, Patton, Ganschow, & Humbach, 2006).

Empirical findings of potential difficulty in the foreign language classroom have been extended to students with attention deficit disorder (ADHD) as well (Sparks, Philips, & Javorsky, 2003). Leons et al. (2009) pointed out that common difficulties for students with ADHD related to executive functioning—such as

planning, organizing, and maintaining focus—impact the independent study and practice required for foreign language acquisition. Difficulties in the essential area of working memory, an expression used to describe short term holding and processing of information, were also noted. Working memory deficits have been linked to challenges in phonological learning due to the resulting "superficial manner" in which phonological information is stored (Simon, 2000, p. 3).

Beyond the body of research examining LD and ADHD, the higher education literature provides insight into other interactions of disability and foreign language learning. For example, an in-depth case study of three students with blindness/ low vision studying languages in a university program in England highlighted few cognitive barriers to the content of foreign language learning, but did indicate an increased student need for accessible formats for foreign language textbooks and assessments, and for classroom materials that include tactile activities to support learning through other modalities (Orsini-Jones, 2009). Hamilton (2008) extended these considerations of students with blindness/low vision further by examining the many visual aspects of traditional foreign language instruction, ranging from information that is written on the board to charts of article declensions to the cultural information conveyed through paintings, photographs, or maps. She suggested structuring activities for involving the entire class in describing and verbalizing these visual elements as a rich learning opportunity.

Another intersection between disability and foreign language learning that has attracted scholarly attention concerns the study-abroad or immersion experience. While areas of difficulty in study abroad are often parallel to barriers in the traditional foreign language classroom, the context of an immersion experience provides further insight into curricular options for foreign language learning. Scheib (2007) examined issues that may arise for some students with various non-apparent disabilities in study abroad experiences. First, students with hearing loss, for example, like all students, may experience difficulty understanding spoken language abroad. Without the possible recourse to the native language, however, they may need to improve their lip-reading of foreign words and be ready to help others understand the need to face them while talking—tasks that a hearing student would not necessarily consider. Second, as Scheib noted, the option to study abroad may help lessen barriers for students with disabilities; while students, such as those with head injuries, may have difficulty with memory and automaticity in learning new vocabulary, these individuals may find the opportunity for immersion in the language a helpful factor in bolstering memory and successful foreign language learning. And finally, individuals with high functioning autism often have specific strengths in categorical thinking and rote learning that may be a very good match for the constancy and other aspects of immersion provided by the study abroad experience. Scheib concluded that

> *While areas of difficulty in study abroad are often parallel to barriers in the traditional foreign language classroom, the context of an immersion experience provides further insight into curricular options for foreign language learning.*

curricular options such as study abroad may be important forms of access to allow diverse students to improve their foreign language skills and gain confidence in foreign language communication.

Though patterns of performance are seen across disability types, it should be remembered that each student presents a unique profile. The literature emphasizes that assumptions and generalizations about the ability to learn a foreign language should not be based on any disability label (Simon, 2009; Sparks, 2009).

## Federal Law and University Response to Foreign Language Learners with Disabilities

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 assures that colleges and universities may not discriminate against individuals with disabilities. In contrast to special education law that guarantees an individualized, free, and appropriate public education to K-12 students, the ADA is a civil rights statute. At the postsecondary level, students with disabilities must be qualified for college admission, must self-identify as an individual with a disability, and must request accommodation. In response, institutions of higher education are mandated to provide accommodations that are deemed reasonable and that do not compromise academic requirements or the essential nature of the course of study. The intent of ADA accommodations is to level the playing field rather than to assure student success (U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2011). Under the guidance of this broad legal framework, colleges and universities have responded to the needs of students with disabilities in foreign language learning through a tripartite combination of classroom accommodation, instructional modification, and policy considerations.

> *Under the guidance of [a] broad legal framework, colleges and universities have responded to the needs of students with disabilities in foreign language learning through a tripartite combination of classroom accommodation, instructional modification, and policy considerations.*

*Classroom Accommodation*

In a review of the literature on evidence-based practices, Ofiesh (2007) reported that providing students with disabilities with note taking assistance and extended time for taking tests were two primary accommodations supported for use in foreign language classrooms. Hodge (2006/2007) described typical foreign language accommodations as also including permission to record lectures, preferred seating in the classroom, and a quiet environment for taking exams. To expand the pedagogical possibilities for foreign language instructors, Scott and Manglitz (2000) worked with modern language faculty to identify additional accommodations and curricular supports that could be catered more specifically to foreign language learning. Testing accommodations (such as audio-recorded dictation sections to allow increased repetition, or permission to write dictated questions before composing responses), administrative accommodations (such as an extended drop/add date, or the ability to audit a second section of a class

without a fee), and additional supports (such as getting course material early or participating in a language focused residence hall) were recommended as accommodations for departmental consideration.

*Instruction*

In an overview of instructional approaches to foreign language access at the college level, Hodge (2006/2007) described best practices as consisting of the provision of accommodations, direct instruction in learning strategies such as mnemonic devices, and study skills that benefit a variety of students including, for example, test preparation, time management, and organization techniques. She recommended technology as a powerful multi-sensory learning tool for instructional supplements and tutorials including such resources as MERLOT's World Languages Portal (2011). Hodge concluded that one of the most difficult areas for college instructors to address is remediation of basic language skills including phonemic and phonological awareness that may continue to challenge students with language-based disabilities.

While remediation of basic language skills exceeds the accommodation mandates of the ADA, some campuses have developed specialized sections of foreign language instruction focused on the specific and remedial needs of students with learning disabilities. The most well-known and enduring model is perhaps the modified foreign language sequence offered at the University of Colorado, Boulder, first instituted in the 1990s. Using pedagogical approaches grounded in LD research, the program is described as highly structured; it also provides direct instruction in basic language skills and features a modified pace of delivery (See Modified Foreign Language Program, 2011 for a complete description). Studies of these specialized sections reported by Downey and Snyder (2001) documented that 95% of students enrolled in the modified courses successfully continued through the third semester of language study.

*Policy*

A final approach to addressing the needs of students with disabilities has been to provide alternatives to campus foreign language requirements. A recent survey by the Modern Language Association found that approximately 50% of U.S. colleges require the study of foreign language for graduation (Lewin, 2010). While institutional policies and practices vary, a majority of college campuses provide administrative options for a waiver or course substitution for individual students with disabilities on a selective case-by-case basis (Driscoll, 2003; Shaw, 1999).

*As students with disabilities matriculate with increasing frequency at universities with significant foreign language requirements, staffing trends in postsecondary foreign language departments suggest that colleges and universities are not always fully equipped to consider individual student needs.*

## Adjunct and Temporary Faculty

As students with disabilities matriculate with increasing frequency at universities with significant foreign language requirements, staffing trends in

postsecondary foreign language departments suggest that colleges and universities are not always fully equipped to consider individual student needs. Of particular interest is the decreasing role tenured and tenure-track faculty play in postsecondary instruction at the beginning and intermediate levels, as well as the lack of professional development opportunities and curriculum design authority afforded to the adjunct instructors and temporary lecturers who have replaced them (Modern Language Association, 2007). The prevalence of non-tenure-track, or contingent, faculty in colleges and universities grew from 22% in 1970 to 48.7% in 2007 (Coalition on the Academic Workforce, 2010), while the

> *Non-tenure-track faculty members now make up a majority of the North American higher education faculty (, while part-time adjunct instructors comprise at least half of the teaching faculty at community colleges*

percentage of full-time faculty (tenured and untenured) declined from 78% in 1970 to 52% in 2005 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2008). By 2005, tenured faculty likewise comprised an ever-shrinking segment of classroom instructors, decreasing from 37% in 1975 to 22% (Gascoigne, Jourdain, & Wong, 2009/2010). Arum and Roksa (2011) asserted that at lower-tiered, resource-poor public institutions, such as the one to be discussed below, part-time and temporary faculty are often hired at an even more accelerated pace. Non-tenure-track faculty members now make up a majority of the North American higher education faculty (MLA, 2011), while part-time adjunct instructors comprise at least half of the teaching faculty at community colleges (Hodge, 2006/2007).

Although the employment of temporary and part-time foreign language faculty has become a financial necessity for many small and mid-sized universities without graduate programs or teaching assistants (Coalition on the Academic Workforce, 2010), the literature indicates that shifts in staffing can have detrimental ramifications for student learning. The Final Report of the MLA Commission on Professional Employment (MLA, 2000) noted that less-than-optimal conditions for adjuncts and lecturers, particularly in the area of foreign languages, "can have a serious impact on the quality of classroom instruction and also on crucial institutional responsibilities like advising and mentoring students, committee work, and curriculum development" (p. 3). As Gascoigne et al. (2009/2010) pointed out, the negative impact on student learning does not stem from the qualifications of the adjunct instructors themselves, but from the lack of institutional support—financial or otherwise—provided to contingent faculty members that would allow them to "feel vested in the department's teaching mission" (p. 10). Landrum (2009) found that while full-time and part-time instructors received similar teaching evaluations and exhibited comparable grade distributions, there were substantial differences in the support mechanisms provided by the institution to each group. Rifkin's (1998) study of community college faculty revealed that adjunct instructors were less likely than their permanent, full-time counterparts to be involved in curricular decisions, to be autonomous with regard to pedagogical choices, and to be dedicated to the values specific to the institution. This lack of

long-term commitment to the mission of the university, as well as the dearth of resources devoted to faculty development, are two factors that have contributed to the decline in student learning documented by Arum and Roksa (2011).

Like adjunct instructors in most academic disciplines, those who teach in foreign language departments are susceptible to conditions that are not ideal, for them or for students. Gascoigne et al. (2009/2010) observed that high turnover rates and last-minute hiring practices lead to a "corps of instructional staff that is in a perpetually novice state" (p. 9). Liu and Zhang (2007) noted both that adjunct instructors are typically assigned classes that full-time faculty have elected not to teach and that adjunct-led classes are the last to be scheduled (often at inconvenient times). These courses are likewise the first to be cancelled due to low enrollments. Liu and Zhang (2007) also reported that contingent faculty are not typically invited or expected to be engaged in the life of the university outside the classroom. This final point is especially marked in foreign language departments in which native speakers are prized for the linguistic expertise and cultural diversity they bring to the classroom, even when their English language skills, their commitment to the values of the particular university, and their understanding of American higher education culture may lag behind those of their American colleagues. As Chaput (2001) asserted,

> Academic culture is distinctive, requiring socio-linguistic, discourse, and cultural competence of its own. American-educated faculty have a headstart in making their way in this culture…. When native-speaker instructors are monolingual and monocultural in the L2, they are likely to find themselves marginalized in matters of decision-making. When instructors are female, monocultural, and teach language at the rank of lecturer (instead of assistant professors teaching a combination of language and literature), they face almost insurmountable obstacles in gaining inclusion into their institution's academic culture. (p. 208)

Finally, the chronic last-minute nature of the adjunct experience, combined with the extreme independence of the position, the lack of thoughtful mentoring and continuity, and the general impossibility of tenure or career advancement, provide little incentive and no real support for part-time and temporary instructors to practice a reflective pedagogy that considers the best methods to teach a unique population of students, such as those with disabilities. Yet, the increasing diversity of college campuses calls for a cadre of foreign language instructors— regardless of rank, culture, or academic background—that understands the value of inclusive teaching strategies.

## Project LINC: Learning in Inclusive Classrooms

Aware of the growing gulf between the needs of college students with disabilities and the resources available to the expanding ranks of part-time and temporary foreign language instructors, Longwood University designed a grant-funded demonstration project to encourage more inclusive foreign language classrooms. Longwood University is a residential, state-supported, four-year

institution in rural central Virginia, enrolling approximately 4200 undergraduates in three colleges: Arts and Sciences, Education and Human Services, and Business and Economics. Five percent of the student body is registered with the Office of Disability Resources. With the exception of students granted a waiver for the foreign language requirement, all students earning a degree must pass a foreign language course at the intermediate level or higher. Most students who complete a placement test during freshmen orientation enter the sequence through one of the beginning-level courses. Seventy percent of students place in a level below the required course, and thus spend at least two semesters in the foreign language sequence. In any given semester, approximately 750 students (18% of the undergraduate student body) are enrolled in general education classes in French, German, or Spanish. Seventy-nine percent of those courses are taught by part-time, temporary, or untenured faculty.

The foreign language requirement for all students was implemented at Longwood University in 2002, when a new general education program was instituted. In order to complete the university's foreign language requirement, students needed to pass a course at the 201 level or higher, though students in the humanities were required to complete a course at the 202 level or higher. Each section at these levels enrolled up to 25 students. Courses at the elementary level (101 and 102) met four hours per week, while courses at the intermediate level (201 and 202) met three hours per week. A five-credit, accelerated elementary course (105) was introduced in 2004 for low-scoring students with substantial previous experience in the language. In all classes, students followed a traditional syllabus that included about five chapter exams per semester, a final oral assessment, frequent vocabulary quizzes, short composition assignments, and daily homework exercises that included written and lab activities. A final cumulative exam was also administered. Because the department philosophy privileged communicative learning, students often worked in pairs or groups. Attendance and classroom participation thus determined up to 15% of the overall grade.

In order to assure access at the time that the foreign language requirement was instituted, students with disabilities were offered traditional classroom accommodations and, on a case-by-case basis, the administrative option to petition for a waiver of the foreign language requirement. Over a four-year period the number of student petitions increased annually. The Modern Languages program and the Office of Disability Resources began a collaboration in order to examine the accommodation process, clarify advising for students provided by both departments, consider policy revisions, and examine instructional options. An impetus to that collaboration was the hypothesis that providing more inclusive instruction would result in the need for fewer waivers from the requirement—a desirable goal for both departments. After a review of the professional literature, it was found that models for specially designed sections of foreign language classes for students with LD were available (e.g., Leons & Herbert, 2002), but little information could be located on making the learning experience more inclusive for students with a variety of disabilities within the regular foreign language curriculum.

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An approach designed to support students with disabilities and instructors in the foreign language classroom was developed, and Project LINC (Learning in Inclusive Classrooms) was successfully funded through the U.S. Department of Education.[1] The purpose of LINC was to create a faculty development curriculum that would increase instructors' awareness both of diverse learners and of design strategies for inclusive pedagogy. The co-directors of the project— one, the director of Disability Resources; the other, a French professor and program coordinator—met monthly over the course of a year with a small group of senior language faculty (a Leadership and Development Team) to isolate key topics and research best practices. Then, in two subsequent years, a two-pronged approach was used to train adjunct faculty and other contingent instructors in the department.

> *The purpose of LINC was to create a faculty development curriculum that would increase instructors' awareness both of diverse learners and of design strategies for inclusive pedagogy.*

The first prong included a foundational workshop in which traditional approaches to disability access were addressed. Employing a framework suggested by the ADA and federal law, workshop leaders clarified university requirements, increased awareness of non-visible disabilities, and specified procedures for student accommodation. The second prong included a series of workshops examining elements of foreign language pedagogy. The principles of Universal Design for Instruction (UDI) (Scott, McGuire, & Shaw, 2003) were used as a structure during monthly meetings to examine barriers to learning experienced by students with disabilities and to reevaluate the design of classroom instruction. UDI has been defined as "an approach to teaching that consists of the proactive design and use of inclusive instructional strategies that benefit a broad range of learners including students with disabilities" (Scott, McGuire, & Embry, 2002, p.1). The UDI framework is part of a broader paradigm shift under way in the field of postsecondary disability. Current approaches to the study of disability and advocacy efforts at the college level are increasingly framing disability as one of many aspects of human diversity, thus linking the design of inclusive learning environments to questions of social justice (Loewen & Pollard, 2010). (See the Project LINC web site at **www.longwood.edu/projectlinc** for more information on UDI and examples of its application in foreign language instruction.)

The curriculum's structure for increasing knowledge of legal requirements followed by an ongoing examination of inclusive pedagogy allowed adjunct and temporary faculty to maintain a heightened awareness of inclusive design over the course of the academic year. A first meeting was held one week before the start of the fall semester. This three-hour foundation workshop introduced participants to the value of inclusive design; stressed the importance of considering the background, anxieties, and motivations of all students in the classroom; and suggested some simple start-up activities (see Appendix A for a list of workshop components). The foundation workshop was followed by monthly 90-minute topical workshops addressing key areas identified by the Leadership and Development Team

including target language use, error correction, group work, foreign language anxiety, and assessment strategies. To help animate and inform the conversation throughout the year, participants prepared for each workshop by reviewing a set of brief reflection questions and a recent article from a peer-reviewed journal.

## Project Outcomes

Four distinct outcomes were observed following the implementation of Project LINC. First, feedback from contingent faculty after each workshop and at the end of the academic year indicated that participants gained a greater awareness of the diversity of students in their classrooms and more confidence in their ability to accommodate and teach these students. This feedback included anonymous post-workshop evaluations as well as an extended face-to-face interview. Throughout the program, participants showed a strong interest in regularly scheduled, guided discussions about foreign language teaching. When prompted on an evaluation form, participants listed "interacting with others [and] discussing strategies to implement in the classroom," "hearing from others," and learning about the "demographics of current students" as the most useful aspects of Project LINC. Indeed, simply interacting with other foreign language instructors in this context helped adjunct and temporary faculty voice important concerns about teaching, even when those concerns had little to do with inclusive pedagogy. Sometimes, when asked about further information they would like to have, faculty offered such seemingly random reactions as: "How many tests should I give to my students in one semester according to your requirements?" "I think class size should be reduced," and "[I] would have liked more concrete examples of actual activities to use in class." While such legitimate concerns often fell outside the scope of the workshops, their appearance on the feedback form suggests how few mechanisms are otherwise available to address the basic questions of part-time instructors and how important it is to provide avenues for discussions on pedagogy.

Post-workshop feedback also showed a clear faculty appreciation for students with disabilities and a desire to understand the often-unfamiliar institutional resources provided to them. "Talk more about how DS [Disability Services] works with students," suggested one participant following the foundation workshop at the beginning of the year. By the end of the series of workshops, participants had become attuned to the unique opportunities that inclusive teaching affords, and demonstrated an awareness of diversity through the evaluations themselves. Asked what other questions they had for the organizers, one participant responded, "Is this information and the pre-workshop reading difficult for non-native English speakers?" Another wrote: "How to accommodate a student who has pronunciation difficulties in her native language, and thus also in her foreign language?"

In addition to a new faculty awareness of classroom diversity, a second outcome of Project LINC included the development of specific researched-based instructional strategies for the foreign language setting. A 90-minute workshop devoted to the challenges of teaching exclusively in the target language, for instance, helped faculty recognize the usefulness of a prominent list of classroom

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prompts and typical questions, as well as the appropriateness of auto-correcting programs such as Spell Check for assignments in which spelling was not an area of explicit assessment. The workshop on target language also provoked a discussion about the uses of the native language in the foreign language classroom and the potential efficacy of brief, predictable moments of respite from target language immersion for students with high anxiety or working memory deficits (Levine, 2003). A workshop devoted to pair work and collaborative activities emphasized the barriers these common foreign language exercises might produce for students with speech or social disabilities, such as autism. Considering ways to support all students, participants debated the strategy of assigning specific tasks and responsibilities within each student group, sparing students the time or anxiety it takes to negotiate individual roles (Oxford, 1997). Other strategies developed during the workshops included a sliding rubric for inclusive assessments and oral interviews, and a reminder that the oftentimes frenetic and visually stimulating layout of a typical foreign language textbook may actually impede the simple and intuitive reception of its contents.

A third outcome for Project LINC was the development and launch of the LINC website, **www.longwood.edu/projectlinc**, which makes materials and resources available worldwide to instructors, faculty coordinators, and disability service providers. This site includes training modules, communication tools, instructional supports, and other materials for inclusive foreign language teaching that can be adapted by individual instructors or entire departments.

Finally, two broad measures of student outcomes were examined. Final grades in all beginning and intermediate foreign language classes were compiled for five semesters in order to establish baseline data before Project LINC. Final grades were then tracked and compiled during the project. Performance of students with disclosed disabilities (defined as students registered with the Office of Disability Resources) was compared with students without disclosed disabilities (see Table 1). The average performance of students with disabilities in foreign language classrooms across instructors and across languages showed an increase in the number of students achieving a final grade of A, B, or C and a decrease in the number of students withdrawing at some point during the semester. Student final grades across groups were found to be similar.

Foreign language waiver requests submitted to the campus Petitions Committee (the university body charged with reviewing this accommodation) were also reviewed over a nine-year period (see Table 2). During the four years prior to the development of Project LINC, eight waivers on average were approved annually. Since the onset of Project LINC, the annual average has dropped to six foreign language waivers.

**Table 1.** Student final grades in beginning and intermediate language courses (Spanish, French, German) before and after contingent faculty support

### Fall 2006-Fall 2008 (Before faculty support)

|  | Final Grade A-C | Final Grade D | Final Grade F | Final Grade W |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Disability N=213** | 63% | 12% | 7% | 18% |
| **No Disability N=3942** | 76% | 12% | 7% | 5% |

### Spring 2009-Fall 2010 (After faculty support)

|  | Final Grade A-C | Final Grade D | Final Grade F | Final Grade W |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Disability N=110** | 74% | 14% | 5% | 7% |
| **No Disability N=2817** | 76% | 12% | 7% | 5% |

**Table 2.** Number of foreign language waivers approved before and after contingent faculty support

| Academic Year | Number of foreign language waivers approved before support |
|---|---|
| **2002-2003** | 4 |
| **2003-2004** | 5 |
| **2004-2005** | 9 |
| **2005-2006** | 15 |
|  | **Number of foreign language waivers approved after support** |
| **2006-2007** | 9 |
| **2007-2008** | 9 |
| **2008-2009** | 2 |
| **2009-2010** | 8 |
| **2010-2011** | 2 |

## Conclusions and Pedagogical Implications

At Longwood University, a somewhat typical mid-sized public institution with a growing population of both students with disabilities and adjunct

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and temporary faculty, change has been observed in recent years. Performance patterns of students without disabilities have remained consistent, while students with disabilities—reflecting a broad cross-section of cognitive and physical diversity—demonstrate a shift toward greater academic success after support was provided for adjunct and temporary faculty through Project LINC. In fact, in the context of greater student success in passing foreign language coursework, waivers of the requirement have decreased 25%. Although other factors may have contributed to these changes, it is possible that they relate to the LINC faculty development program which was designed to promote greater awareness of student diversity, to enhance communication across departments, to provide regular and specific opportunities for reflective teaching, and to encourage faculty to consider their ability to modify instructional features in order to be more inclusive. While the project focused on part-time and non-tenure-track faculty (those who are largely responsible for teaching the lower-level language courses and who are typically afforded few faculty development opportunities), its pedagogical outcomes would undoubtedly be valuable to full-time and tenure-track faculty as well who teach at the beginning and intermediate levels. It appears that this faculty development, born from increased communication and collaboration between the foreign language program and the Office of Disability Resources, has resulted in a more positive and equitable experience for students with disabilities.

> *Performance patterns of students without disabilities have remained consistent, while students with disabilities—reflecting a broad cross-section of cognitive and physical diversity—demonstrate a shift toward greater academic success after support was provided for adjunct and temporary faculty through Project LINC.*

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## Appendix A

### Foundation Workshop Overview

1. Who are our students?
2. Working with the Office of Disability Resources
3. Principles of Inclusive Teaching
4. Getting started: Early steps toward a more inclusive instruction

### Foreign Language Teaching Resources

1. The Effective Foreign Language Teacher Checklist
2. Important Activities for the Beginning of the Semester
3. Getting to Know your Students: Foreign Language Autobiography Activity
4. Advising Tips for the Foreign Language Requirement
5. Foreign Language Placement Guidelines
6. ACTFL Standards for Foreign Language Learning

### Disability Resources

1. Disability Services FAQ
2. Early Warning Feedback Form: A Communication Tool for Monitoring Student Performance
3. Options for Accommodation and Supports in Foreign Language Learning

### Related Reading

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# Student-teacher dialogue journals: Students' concerns about Spanish 101

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## Abstract

The present study explores 110 first language (L1) dialogue journals written by university-level students of beginning Spanish over a period of seven semesters. The analysis identifies and describes the particular concerns these second language (L2) students highlighted about Spanish 101, analyzes how students expressed these concerns, and outlines specific ways in which their teacher responded.

## Introduction

Sensitive to the realities of the foreign/second language (FL/SL) learning experience, most teachers are aware of the many challenges that students confront as they enter Language 101. Though teachers recognize students' concerns, relatively few studies have explored the issues identified by the students themselves or analyzed how students give voice to these concerns.

*Dialogue journals are one tool that some teachers have found useful for engaging beginning students in "written conversations" (Linnell, 2010, p. 23) about the language learning experience.*

Dialogue journals are one tool that some teachers have found useful for engaging beginning students in "written conversations" (Linnell, 2010, p. 23) about the language learning experience. In fact, in various contexts and at diverse levels of experience, journaling has also long been considered a valuable tool not only for students but also for teachers, particularly in regard to their professional development (Bain, Mills, Ballantyne, & Packer, 2002; Garmon, 2001; Gray, 1998; Hobson, 1996; Numrich, 1996; Wickstrom, 2003; Zulich, Bean, & Herrick, 1992). These studies demonstrate the potential of journals to promote teacher reflection, engagement, and a critical understanding of pedagogical theory and practices. In particular, Hobson (1996) claims that

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teachers' use of journals is valuable because it is "a way of developing a reflective ongoing relationship with oneself and one's work" (p. 9) and that such writing "can become the textbook of emergent practice [and] ongoing research . . . " (p. 10).

There is renewed interest in the use of dialogue journals written by teachers and their students (for two early examples, see Kreeft Peyton, 1990 and Kreeft Peyton & Staton, 1993). More recently, Werderich (2006) found dialogue journals to be an effective forum in which to individualize instruction. In another study, she investigated teachers' responses to dialogue journals written by male middle school reading students and found that teachers took on four different roles: reader, responder, facilitator, and encourager (Werderich, 2010). Darhower (2004) found that the dialogue journal is "an interactive writing environment in which learner goals and agency can comprise an important part of the learning process" (p. 324). Moreover, Schwarzer (2004) highlighted the strategies used by learners and teachers to communicate through dialogue journals; these strategies include students' use of the L1 for various purposes as well as teachers' written attempts to foster authentic interaction. Similarly, Mirhosseini (2009) emphasized the ability of dialogue journals to enrich the teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing and "create a meaningful teaching-learning experience" (p. 40).

Some investigations have focused specifically on the role of dialogue journals written in the target language. For example, Linnell (2010) highlights ways that teachers can use dialogue journals to focus students' attention on grammatical form, and she suggests several ways that teachers can "incidentally" (p. 25) provide learners with corrective feedback. She argues that "teachers can incorporate focus on form both intensively and incidentally without compromising the communicative nature of the dialogue journal" (p. 27). Although her study focused on journals written by students and their teacher, Kennedy and Trofimovich (2010) explored students' language awareness as expressed through student-student dialogue journals; in this study, learners evaluated their own pronunciation and responded to the comments of their student partner. Teachers did not read these journals until the course ended and grades had been assigned. Kennedy and Trofimovich (2010) found a high correlation between the students' pronunciation ratings and the number of qualitative metalinguistic comments they made in their journals. That is, the more students interacted with each other about sounds and articulation, the better their actual pronunciation.

> *The present study investigates dialogue journals as a valuable source of information regarding students' concerns as they begin their university-level language study.*

The present study investigates dialogue journals as a valuable source of information regarding students' concerns as they begin their university-level language study. Previous research points to issues that affect students as they study a foreign language. For instance, SL/FL learning anxiety is a well-known characteristic of students' language classroom experience (Cheng, 2002; Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002; Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986; Khan, 2010; Kitano, 2001; Koga, 2010; Mak, 2011;

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Pishghadam & Akhondopoor, 2011). Additionally, students' motivation, purpose of study, and perceptions of the applicability of language skills have been the foci of several investigations (see, e.g., Antes, 1999; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2010; Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008; Mandell, 2002; Mohebi & Khodadady, 2011; Ossipov, 2000; Ushioda, 2011; Wen, 1997). As will be seen, students' dialogue journals highlight these and numerous other issues central to the SL/FL learning process.

## The present study

The present study is part of a larger investigation (Ewald, 2004; 2006) on a series of dialogue journal interactions between a language teacher-researcher (me) and her students; in these "written conversations," students responded to questions about language learning and explored related areas of interest. Specifically, this investigation reports the particular concerns students highlighted about taking Spanish 101 (a first-year, first-semester course); analyzes how they articulated their concerns; and outlines the ways in which I responded.

The purpose of this paper then is two-fold: (1) to bring to light the content of these students' concerns and their teacher's replies, and (2) to explore the ways in which these students and their teacher express themselves through dialogue journals.

## Context and Participants

Throughout seven semesters of Spanish 101, these 129 students (54 male, 75 female) and I wrote 570 total dialogue journal entries (see Appendix A). These seven sections of Spanish 101, each section consisting of 18-21 students, met in two large, public universities over a period of 2 ½ years. Students represented a wide variety of majors, and most were enrolled in Spanish 101 primarily to fulfill their university language requirement. The majority were traditional college students whose L1, for the most part, was English. They were either true beginners or had already completed one to two years of high school Spanish. As their language teacher, I had been trained in communicative language teaching; consequently, these classes were conducted primarily in Spanish and focused on developing students' Spanish oral communicative skills and abilities.

Although the language of the classroom was Spanish, students used English to write five one half- to two-page dialogue journal entries, which were always assigned as homework. For each entry, students were given a suggested written prompt (see Appendix B); they could choose either to respond to this question or write about any other course-related topic. Journals were not assigned a specific grade but students were given homework or participation credit at the end of the semester for having completed them.

## Data Collection

The data for the present study are taken entirely from students' first dialogue journal entries of which 110 were submitted. The suggested prompt for this introductory journal, assigned for homework on the first day of class, was the following: "What concerns, if any, do you have about studying Spanish? And/Or whatever you want to write about." This topic invited students to express their own

perspectives regarding being a Spanish 101 student as well as to serve as a medium through which they and I could begin to know and relate to one another.

To avoid contaminating the data, students' permission to use their journals for research purposes was obtained at the end of the course. Thus, students wrote these dialogue journals primarily to fulfill course requirements as well as to communicate with me as their teacher. Ultimately, all the students' journal entries were coded by letter (A-G) to represent each course section and by number (1-5) to represent each assignment or topic.

## Data Analysis

Each student's entry for journal #1 went through a process of multiple coding. First, I identified their recurring concerns and I highlighted each instance of those particular themes. I then analyzed students' comments to determine the techniques or strategies they used to express their concerns. Finally, I analyzed the various ways in which I had responded to students, identifying patterns that emerged as I revisited my own written comments. These final coding stages took place long after participants had completed their respective courses with me. In fact, while conducing the present data analysis, I had little or no recollection of these particular journal exchanges. While rereading them, though I usually remembered the students, I often felt as if I were reading their journals, including my own comments, for the first time.

## Findings

The first section of this analysis identifies and describes the particular concerns these students highlighted about Spanish 101. The next section analyzes how students expressed these concerns, and then the final section outlines specific ways in which I responded.

*The Nature of Student Concerns Expressed in Journal #1*

*Students' recognition of the importance of and even the need to learn Spanish was expressed as a concern and not merely as an observation.*

The most frequent concern expressed by these students had to do with a general belief that it was necessary for them to learn Spanish to communicate with Spanish-speakers in the United States as well as to satisfy work, travel, study abroad, and graduate school purposes (26 instances, see Table 1). Students' recognition of the importance of and even the need to learn Spanish was expressed as a concern and not merely as an observation. This perspective can perhaps be explained by their other expressed concerns. Closely related, in frequency and in theme, were their expressions of apprehension, specifically a fear of failure (23); this fear was based either on past unsuccessful attempts to learn a second language or on an overall lack of confidence they felt as language learners.

Many students also expressed concern about what they perceived to be a lack of language experience when comparing themselves with the classmates they had just met on the first day of class (19). Others recognized that a lot of work,

time, and practice were required to learn a language, and they were concerned about their ability to devote enough of themselves to the task (17). Tying for fifth place in terms of frequency were concerns about learning grammar rules (14), the difficulty of memorizing a lot of material (14), and class participation, particularly for those who described themselves as shy (14). Also relatively high on the list were concerns about pronouncing Spanish well in front of the teacher and their classmates (13).

Other concerns were voiced less frequently. Some students wrote about their belief that for them language learning was particularly hard (9). Others were concerned about their ability to comprehend what the teacher would say in class and the listening material that accompanied the textbook (8). Understanding how long it takes to learn a language, some expressed concerns that even if they studied hard and did their best, they might still never be good enough to use the language in real life (8). Other concerns centered on the confusion students might face because they had previously studied other languages (7), were older than their classmates (7), had not studied Spanish for a long time (7), and/or were busy with other commitments (7). The same number of students explicitly wrote that they did not have any concerns or worries about taking Spanish 101 (7).

There were a number of concerns echoed by multiple students but in relatively small numbers. For instance, a few students expressed concerns about their overall GPA or their Spanish course grade (6), some wrote about a different topic (6), and others worried about learning Spanish well enough to use it with specific family members and friends (6). Some were concerned about the difficulty of upcoming tests and quizzes (5), explained that they got nervous in language classes (5), and noted that they did not like the workbook that came with the course text (5). A handful were concerned that they did not know English grammar and vocabulary well and worried that this lack of knowledge might affect their ability to learn Spanish (4). A few wondered if they would be able to keep up with the course material (3), and others were concerned because they expected to miss some classes throughout the semester for various reasons (3). Also mentioned were worries about the specific ability to learn accent marks (2), spelling (2), or verb conjugations (2), and a couple of others expressed concern that they might have problems as the course difficulty increased (2). One even expressed his worry that he might learn the wrong kind (formal/informal) of Spanish (1).

**Table 1.** Students' Concerns Expressed through Dialogue Journal Entry #1

| Concern | Frequency |
|---|---|
| I need Spanish for grad school/in US, for Work/travel/to study abroad | 26 |
| Apprehensive / fear of failure /past failure/Lack of confidence in ability to do it | 23 |
| I have little or no experience compared to others | 19 |
| There is a lot of work / time / practice required | 17 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Memorization is difficult / there is a lot of it | 14 |
| I am worried about learning Spanish grammar rules | 14 |
| I am shy/participation is hard for me | 14 |
| Pronunciation is hard for me | 13 |
| Language learning is hard for me | 9 |
| Listening comprehension in and out of class is a challenge | 8 |
| Will I ever be good enough to use it? | 8 |
| My previous experience with other languages might make Spanish harder | 7 |
| I'm very busy | 7 |
| I have no concerns / worries | 7 |
| I'm older | 7 |
| It's been a long time since I studied Spanish | 7 |
| I worry about my GPA or grade or passing | 6 |
| Student wrote about other topic(s) | 6 |
| I need Spanish to talk with family/friends | 6 |
| I get nervous | 5 |
| Tests/quizzes are hard for me | 5 |
| I don't like the workbook | 5 |
| I don't know English grammar/vocabulary | 4 |
| I'm afraid that missing class might hurt me | 3 |
| Will I be able to keep up? | 3 |
| Accent marks are hard | 2 |
| Spelling is hard | 2 |
| Verbs are hard | 2 |
| I'll have problems as material gets harder | 2 |
| I might learn formal/informal Spanish | 1 |

*Student Strategies for Addressing the Journal Entry #1 Prompt*

As will be seen in the excerpts below, these students used a variety of strategies to address this journal prompt. Some asked me questions, either real or rhetorical, often based on experiences they had from the past. Others took advantage of this journal opportunity to tell stories about their previous language learning experiences. A few confessed or warned me of their own behaviors or personality traits that they believed could affect their classroom performance. Many wrote about language learning issues and analyzed their own perspectives as they articulated their concerns in this journal entry. The categorization of specific

strategies in this analysis is not meant to be an exhaustive list but to serve as a lens through which to view the approaches students used to address this journal prompt. Below are some examples of the often-overlapping strategies they employed.

The following student used a question to elicit my opinion:

> …[W]hen I stud[ied] math, I found it more effective to work a little bit each night. **That is my strategy with Spanish, what do you think?** The other part of my strategy is to make more of an effort to make class because I think that is where I really got into trouble, and not just in your class either. [bold mine]

As in the following entry, many students told stories and provided specific examples of their previous struggles to support their feelings and beliefs:

> Well after three trips to the bookstore and almost $100.00 in book and activity books and CDs I am ready to try Spanish again. I say again because I tried it 6 years ago in 9th and 10th grades and the fact that I quit due to my D's and C's is the greatest regret that I have to date. In fact maybe subconsciously the reason I am trying Spanish again is because when I quit everyone, meaning teachers and family members, said I would never pick it up again. Well ha because I am picking it up again and this time I plan to do very good. However I do admit even though I have had a lot of success in college the fear of Spanish is still in me; so much that I am only taking the class on an P/F basis. This is because I have 3 other hard classes and I am trying to compete with the brightest students at Harvard and Stanford and the like for the very prestigious and coveted Investment Banking and Management Consulting positions.

While documenting their struggles, students often tried to prepare or even warn me, as their current teacher, of what might lie ahead:

> I'm looking forward to learning the Spanish language. However, it looks like I'm in for a tough time. It seems like most of the other students in class have a better background in the language than I do. I hope that this fact doesn't change how the class is paced. It already feels like maybe I'm missing something. **You will probably get a lot of 'why is it like that?' questions from me.** … Since this is only the first week and I've never taken a university language course I may be only worrying unnecessarily. Let's hope so. [bold mine]

Some students used this journal entry as an opportunity to confess specific bad habits, analyzing what worked well for them as students in the past and what had not:

> In all honesty, this is a really hard subject for me. As you know, I have no experience at all in foreign language other than a little bit of Japanese in high school in which I suffered horribly. Enough excuses… My strategy this time is to modify my study habits. In my other classes

I use a kind of binge and purge kind of method which gets me by. Of course I could learn more if I was more diligent.

In a similar analytical mode, others expressed expectations for the class or for themselves during our semester together:

The last time I attempted to study a foreign language was about four or five years ago while I was a freshman in high school. At that time I had never before thought about what learning a language entailed, and I was completely bewildered. Once again, I find myself in a similar situation. Although I have forgotten most of the Latin that I supposedly 'learned' all those year ago, I still have some knowledge as far as how to go about studying foreign languages and breaking them down into comprehensive units. This is not to say that I don't get insanely nervous when I think about having to attend Spanish class; I do. It won't however, kill me (or my ego) in the end. I just hope that the atmosphere of the class is supportive and encouraging.

And many used the journals to analyze their concerns, worries and fears as part of the process of putting their perspectives in print:

You know, it's funny. I'm really not afraid of public speaking or participating in class, but this one scares me. Logically it doesn't make sense, I know. But logic doesn't affect our emotions. I think that the only cure for this is becoming more comfortable with the subject. So I will use fear to motivate me!  Not of you, but of the language.

I think some of my fear of practicing Spanish conversation stems from an experience I had when my husband and I visited Puerto Rico. My in-laws' neighbors believed I was hiding my ability to speak Spanish. They were sure I routinely spoke Spanish at home and thought they could trick me into speaking Spanish by bombarding me with Spanish conversation. Latin Americans tend to stand much closer to each other than North Americans do when having a conversation. It takes some getting used to, and I felt trapped by these people speaking Spanish right into my face for several minutes. Although I had wanted to try to speak some Spanish during that visit, my limited vocabulary was not enough to fend off the attack. My desire to be a little outgoing and practice what Spanish I did know completely evaporated.

My main concern about studying Spanish is whether or not I will be able to keep up with the rest of the class. Everyone seems to have a fairly good background in this language, but my background is very weak. I took the two years of Spanish offered at my high school, but my teacher was not fluent enough in the language to answer all of the concerns or questions posed by the students. I'm looking forward to having a teacher who was hired because she speaks Spanish and not because she can teach the Kindergarten through fourth grade music

program. Also, I have not yet mastered the tape that came with the book. I cannot match up the correct exercises in the workbook with the exercises on the tape. These are my only real concerns. My final concern is more superficial than anything: Will I sound stupid in front of the rest of the class?" A concern any freshman would have in a room full of upper classmen. I hope that we are able to learn more about the Spanish culture. I hope that we are able to delve more into their holiday celebrations, their everyday life, and the differences between their culture and ours. I think this class will be very interesting and very helpful in the future. All in all, I look forward to learning the Spanish language and the Spanish culture.

I think it is harder learning a second language that organizes its sentences so much different than we do in the English language. The vocabulary is not too hard to grasp, but the placement of the verbs and other things dealing with grammar is the part that confuses me. For example, Where are you from? Translates to *De donde eres tu*? [sic] If you literally take apart that sentence and translate in English, it says From where are you. That arrangement of words is totally backwards to me and seems odd. I would have to say that is the toughest part for me.

It is important to note that though no entry was the same, there were similarities in students' approaches and, as previously mentioned, some overlap among their strategies as many students used a combination of these techniques to respond to the prompt and express their concerns.

*Student Reactions and Teacher Responses in Journal Entry #1*

The excerpts above represent typical students' responses to the prompt. Behind the strategies they used, and perhaps, at least to some extent, motivating those strategies, were students' emotional and psychological reactions to their first day of class experiences and to the journal prompt. As will be seen below in my journal comments, students' reactions often caught my attention as their teacher in notable ways and elicited particular responses from me. Below are examples of students' reactions along with an analysis of my responses. Once again, this categorization of students' specific reactions should not be viewed as an exhaustive list but rather as an organizing framework for the resulting analysis.

*1. Anxious.* Though most students explained their worries in a relatively straightforward manner, there were often undertones of certain emotional reactions or personality factors that I, as the instructor, noted and addressed in my response. For example, Kelly (all students names are pseudonyms), one of the participants, used her journal to address a concern about simultaneously keeping up with the material and learning it well enough to remember it later:

My main concerns about studying Spanish are that I won't be able to keep up with the lessons being taught, that I'll rush to keep up with them and end up forgetting what I've learned because I didn't spend

enough time with them, and that I'll learn things well and end up forgetting them at a later time anyway. — Kelly

Kelly's stringing together of potentially problematic issues along with her concern that even if she does learn things well she will ultimately forget them anyway reflected her heightened anxiety about the language learning process. My response indicated that I detected a hint of panic in Kelly's statements that I tried to alleviate in my response by focusing on what she would need to do to learn the material well and stay caught up in the course. I expressed agreement with her ideas but tried to refocus her attention away from her concerns and on how she would handle the challenge:

That's quite a statement!  Your concerns are good ones. It's hard to keep up with a language class — It's a daily challenge. But, getting behind is frustrating and it's really hard to catch back up once it happens. And, as you say, spending sufficient time with the material is important, too.

*2. Dramatic.* Other students were notably dramatic in the expression of their concerns. Lynne's specific vocabulary and word choice accurately reflected her high level of intelligence and insightful reflection. Though conveyed somewhat dramatically, her concerns were deeply felt and communicated sincere anxiety about language learning (bolded text is mine for emphasis):

I have several concerns that weigh heavily on my psyche as I ponder the disciplines of learning Spanish. My prevailing concern is the ability to comprehend and absorb all of the information. **The fear of failure** is great due to the **unwelcome pressure** of graduation. If I fail I will not graduate. My intentions are to work hard and prayerfully endeavor the **perils** of my Spanish career without incident.  — Lynne

Though I always provided comments throughout the students' journals, drawing lines to statements they had written, and then adding my own thoughts, some of my overall responses, like the one above to Kelly, were written as a paragraph at the end of the students' journal. For Lynne, I addressed issues she had raised by highlighting relevant related statements and adding the following comments:

— "Fail?!  We've just begun!"
— "Yes, I know. It really is unwelcome pressure, isn't it?!"
— "Exactly what perils do you foresee?"

At the end, I added the following encouragement:

There is a lot of info to comprehend and absorb but I think you'll do fine. Give it all time. Glad you're in class.

My comments were intended to reduce her level of anxiety by suggesting that her concern might be somewhat of an overreaction since we had just started the semester and by communicating that I understood her worries about needing to

graduate on time. I also tried to refocus her attention on specific concerns she had about "the perils of her Spanish career" in order to distract her from an overall sense of fear that could have prevented her from focusing on the task at hand (i.e., learning some Spanish).

*3. Informed.* Particularly engaging were the informed reflections of some students who were majoring or working in academic areas such as psychology, education, or science; these learners applied concepts related to those fields to their upcoming experiences in Spanish 101. For example, one "non-traditional" language learner expressed concern regarding his age and how it might affect his language learning:

> I feel at a biological disadvantage. At age 60, I wonder if I have the mental flexibility to learn a new language. I look around me and see fresh young faces. As a neurologist, I know the brittling of the intellect that goes with age; I have even seen my own CAT scan (on a slow day in the lab) and noted widening of the sulci – an indication of atrophy. While I can compensate for this in other courses, the acquisition of language skills is truly sensitive to the plasticity of the brain. I expect to have to work exceptionally hard. — Chuck

Once again, I directed my responses toward the concern Chuck had raised. I highlighted his last statement about the need to work exceptionally hard and made the following two remarks:

> — "I bet you would anyway."

> — "I think you're correct in that you'll have to work hard. It does take a lot of time to learn a language. Let me know how I can be of help."

Looking back, if I could revise or add to my response, I would address more specifically the issues Chuck raised about language learning and the brain and engage him more fully in a dialogue about the scientific basis of his concerns. I was in ideal position to learn more about these issues directly from him as a neurologist and to benefit from his perspective and knowledge but I let the opportunity pass by. My aim seems to have been to express some level of agreement with him and to expand his point to include the fact that language learning, for learners of all ages, takes a great deal of time. But, in hindsight, I now see that I failed to take advantage of this opportunity to collaborate with him more fully and to share the knowledge we both had from our respective academic and professional fields.

*4. Enthusiastic.* The next entry's tone is characterized by enthusiasm. Though Timothy expressed a variety of goals and concerns about language learning, his overall approach was quite positive. He recognized several things he could do to have a successful semester and reflected on them in light of his specific fears about learning Spanish:

> The last time I took a language class was my junior year of high school back in '91. To say the least, it was unsuccessful. At the time, I was certain I was just no good at learning a second language and was convinced it was a waste of time. Now I realize that I simply had no

desire to put in the time required to do well. I was lacking the desire to be able to speak another language. That has changed drastically. I can now classify my desire to learn other languages as a strong craving. I have found every reason in the world, and then some, to learn to speak Spanish. There are other languages I feel I will need to learn, but Spanish is by far the most important. I would like to learn Spanish as quickly as I can. My goal is to be able to speak it by the time I graduate which is 2 years from now.

Still, even with all of my drive and desire, part of me is still afraid that I won't be able to learn a second language. I am hoping that during this semester, I can defeat my fear of failure when it comes to learning a language. If I can get that little voice that sits at the back of my consciousness and whispers, 'You failed at it once and you'll do it again!' to be quiet, I will consider this semester a success! I plan on sticking with this for a long time. This is not a one-semester course for me. —Timothy

My response affirmed his positive attitude and encouraged him to maintain it. I also made a specific suggestion to Timothy about studying abroad to help him consider how he might fully pursue his desire to learn the language well:

Thanks for sharing all this with me. I'm really glad to know what your past experience has been with language learning. Don't get discouraged. Just keep up and don't allow yourself to not understand something. When you get stuck, stop me, ask questions, get help. You'll do well.

Ever considered a study abroad experience? If you really want to speak a language, there's nothing like day-to-day contact with the language and the people.

My comments also reminded him of his own responsibility in fulfilling his goal while at the same time they urged him to use me, as his teacher, as a language learning resource. By encouraging him to "stop me" and to "ask questions," I suggested particular ways he might positively affect his classroom experience; moreover, by telling him to "get help," I was reminding him of my availability outside of class. My response was meant to help him quiet "the little voice" in the back of his consciousness whispering to him his own negative predictions about his performance.

5. *Self-critical.* Some journals reflected a heightened sense of students' own insecurities about their language learning ability and were characterized by judgmental statements about themselves. For example, Hilary expressed doubts about her aptitude for learning Spanish claiming that she "continually struggles:"

What concerns do I have about studying Spanish? I have many concerns about learning a new language. When talking to others who have previously taken language courses, I realize there is a distinct difference between those who easily 'pick it up' and others who

struggle. I am one who continually struggles! I am concerned that I will struggle to comprehend Spanish and still will not understand it. I'm afraid it will not flow, make sense, and instead will appear as several fragments with no connection. — Hilary

Though perhaps exaggerated, this student's view of herself as one who would struggle with Spanish was the central idea that caught my attention and became the focus of my response. I followed up on the issue of struggling but tried to offer Hilary some perspective as well, that is, suggesting that she request help when necessary as a means of managing her struggle:

Struggling is okay. The trick to understanding is, of course, studying but also letting me know when you don't understand and when you need help. Just don't get behind or allow yourself to get lost. Keep me informed about how things are going and how I can help, OK?

By offering advice and assistance, I tried to remind Hilary that she was not in this struggle alone. Whether based on previous experiences or not, some students anticipate that any difficulty they have with learning their L2 will be their own problem. My goal was to emphasize that she should use me as a resource and support.

*6. Analytic.* Finally, some students' journals reflected a very analytic approach to the language learning experience. Pamela's journal entry #1 revealed that in writing about her first day's class experience, she was coming to terms with how she would think about the course and manage her nervousness:

Tonight in class I was very excited. Partly because it was the first day of a new class and partly because I was extremely nervous. I've never been one who enjoyed talking in front of lots of other people…and lots of people is defined by more than 2 in my book. I guess this is just one more things that **I'll be working on while I'm in college**. It doesn't seem like that kind of situation **will just disappear forever!** I am sure, however, that I'm not the only student who has this problem…I may just focus on it a little more than others do. Palms sweating, heart pounding, blood pressure rising, adrenaline pumping, feeling of suffocation, and a quivering voice to go with the shaking hands…and fear in my eyes…complete terror is more like it (sigh). I've got to get over this embarrassment issue.

Once I convince myself that everyone else feels as unsure and silly as I do about trying something new...then this class will be a blast! I found myself laughing out loud as we were reading new phrases from the book in class tonight. **Laughing at myself. It was fun.** — Pamela

In my response, I highlighted a couple of her sentences (in bold above) and made the following comments:

— Yeah – it's a 'learned thing' for most of us. I get nervous, too.

— Definitely not!

— Your attitude is very refreshing!  I enjoyed this journal and found myself laughing out loud!  Your feelings are very normal. Just give it time. It'll get better. It really will. You'll see. I want you to tell me on the last day of class if you agree with me, okay?  Let me know when/how I can help.

My comments were aimed at making a personal connection with her by admitting that even as the teacher, I also got nervous; also, they were intended to affirm her thinking and to praise her for her ability to reason through the emotional reaction she was having to the first class session. From nervous and terrified to laughing at herself and finding it to be "fun," she had experienced a range of emotions that deserved the attention she gave them in her journal. Her playful tone suggested to me that she had emerged from the experience with a better understanding of herself and a more informed idea about how to go forward in this class.

## Pedagogical Implications

It is important that educators not lose sight of the fact that students enter classrooms with previous and sometimes negative learning experiences, fears, worries, bad habits, and expectations. It is likely that all of these factors will affect their attitudes and ultimately their performance. Dialogue journals such as the one highlighted in this study provide SL learners with a forum in which to express themselves while simultaneously offering teachers the opportunity to hear their students and even respond to their concerns.

> *It is important that educators not lose sight of the fact that students enter classrooms with previous and sometimes negative learning experiences, fears, worries, bad habits, and expectations. It is likely that all of these factors will affect their attitudes and ultimately their performance.*

In addition to the topics listed in Appendix B, teachers could invite students to write about issues related to specific activities and/or goals in their own classrooms. For example, a teacher who frequently incorporates small group work could ask students to write about their perspectives on effective peer collaboration. Teachers who have a particular group of students who consistently use the L1 without attempting to communicate in the L2 could suggest that students explore the potential advantages and disadvantages of each language and consider their effect on the SL learning process. In short, dialogue journals provide a forum for addressing and/or exploring a wide variety of issues with students.

Though many SL teachers seek to use the target language almost exclusively, at the level of Language 101, these kinds of dialogue exchanges obviously cannot be carried out in the students' L2. Regardless of one's view of the justification of judicious L1 use supported by a growing number of researchers, these dialogue

journals can be completed outside of class and do not take away from the L2 input and practice students receive in the classroom.

Admittedly, teachers who engage in dialogue journals with their students quickly discover the time commitment involved in reading and responding to each student's journal entries. However, time invested in getting to know students on a personal, individual level is rarely wasted. In fact, the common complaint of large class sizes and the lack of time to interact with each student can be countered, at least in part, by the use of dialogue journals outside of class. Nevertheless, for teachers who are responsible for a very large number of students in an academic term, the task would be considerably greater. Some teachers might prefer to take advantage of technology that could lessen the time it takes to handwrite responses, and e-mail dialogue journals or even more public classroom websites could be useful. But, less private exchange forums, though perhaps more efficient, might sacrifice some of the thoughtful, personal responses on the part of students and teachers. Other options are reducing the number of entries assigned; even one could prove helpful, and staggering the due dates to avoid being overwhelmed by all of them at once.

> *Regardless of one's view of the justification of judicious L1 use supported by a growing number of researchers, these dialogue journals can be completed outside of class and do not take away from the L2 input and practice students receive in the classroom.*

At times, some teachers, especially those new to dialogue journaling, express uncertainty about how to address issues raised by students and do not know how to respond to some of their comments and perspectives. Moreover, perhaps even afraid of what students might say if given a chance, some teachers prefer to avoid inviting students to dialogue with them about classroom and language-related issues. The following list highlights some suggestions for teachers who request advice about how to respond to students in this type of forum.

*Suggestions for teacher responses*
- Acknowledge the students' expressed concerns.
- Address the students' specific concerns.
- Refocus students' attention on what they need to do to learn the language.
- Help students not to overreact emotionally to the experience.
- Emphasize specific, relevant issues that will help them be successful language learners (e.g., the need to study in small "chunks;" the daily nature of the course; and the fact that time is necessary, and that anxiety is 'normal' in the language learning process).
- Affirm students' ideas when they are correct.
- React appropriately to students' tone and don't ignore or downplay their feelings.
- Ask a question/Answer a question.
- Engage students' own field(s) of expertise or experience.
- Individualize responses and offer personal information when appropriate.

- Promise help and support.
- Offer advice when appropriate.
- Invite them to visit you and work with you.
- Make specific suggestions related to their journal content (e.g., study abroad, work with the same or different group partner(s), use Spanish as much as possible in small groups, and do additional online exercises).
- Engage in genuine dialogue.
- Try to promote further "conversation."

> *When teachers are sensitive to students' genuine expressions of concern and take advantage of opportunities to respond individually, students positively evaluate the experience and benefit as language learners.*

When teachers are sensitive to students' genuine expressions of concern and take advantage of opportunities to respond individually, students positively evaluate the experience and benefit as language learners (Ewald, 2004; 2006). The extensive time and energy dialogue journals require are well worth the effort. Establishing and maintaining a relationship with students in which they have regular opportunities to share their perspectives and to engage in genuine dialogue with their teacher enhances both the language learning process and the SL classroom experience. These kinds of exchanges provide teachers with a useful window into their students' opinions and experiences that can inform their teaching and help shape their own perspectives.

## Acknowledgments

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**Student-teacher dialogue journals**

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**Student-teacher dialogue journals**

## Appendix A

### Total Number of Journal Entries Completed

| Class Section | Journal Entry #1 | Journal Entry #2 | Journal Entry #3 | Journal Entry #4 | Journal Entry #5 | Extra Journal Entries | Total Journal Entries |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | 18 | 16 | 15 | 15 | 16 | 2 | 82 |
| B | 13 | 19 | 19 | 13 | 14 | | 78 |
| C | 18 | 18 | 18 | 18 | 18 | | 90 |
| D | 12 | 12 | 12 | 13 | 13 | 3 | 65 |
| E | 13 | 15 | 14 | 14 | 15 | | 71 |
| F | 17 | 17 | 16 | 16 | 17 | | 83 |
| G | 19 | 21 | 21 | 21 | 19 | | 101 |
| Totals | 110 | 118 | 115 | 110 | 112 | 5 | 570 |

### Appendix B

### Suggested journal topics

Journal Entry #1    What concerns, if any, do you have about studying Spanish? And/Or whatever you want to write about.

Journal Entry #2    Do you view "grammar" or "fluency" as most important? What does each term mean? Do errors affect both equally? And/Or whatever you want to write about.

Journal Entry #3    How do you learn Spanish? Pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency. What do you find most effective? And/Or whatever you want to write about.

Journal Entry #4    What classroom expressions do you need to know/ would be helpful to know to use Spanish in the classroom? What do you think about using Spanish in the classroom? And/Or whatever you want to write about.

Journal Entry #5    For final journal #5, I would like you to write about the journals themselves. Again, this is a suggested topic, feel free to answer any or all of the questions below and/or to write about whatever you want to write about.

- Did the journals have any effect on your proficiency in and/or attitude toward this course or instructor? If so, what role did they play?
- Were the above topics appropriate for the course? Do you have any topic suggestions?
- Generally, were writing the journals and communicating with your instructor through them helpful? Why or why

not?
- Did your instructor comment on the content of your journals? If so, what effect did this have?
- Would you have liked there to be more / less journals or was the number about right? Do you have any suggestions about the format of the journals in terms of whatever?
- What is your overall (general and specific) reaction to journal writing in this course?

# Using research to design advanced grammar courses:
# A case study in Spanish

Jane E. Berne, *University of North Dakota*

## Abstract

Research into second and foreign language (L2) teaching and learning has typically focused on beginning and intermediate learners; however, in the past two decades, researchers have begun to investigate L2 learning and teaching at advanced levels of proficiency. Whereas beginning and intermediate L2 courses focus on developing overall proficiency in L2, courses at the advanced level focus on specific content areas, including grammar. This article examines teaching grammar at the advanced level by first reviewing numerous approaches presented in the literature and then describing a specific advanced Spanish grammar course designed by the author. This description includes a discussion of how specific research findings have been or could be incorporated when revising such a course.

## Introduction

Over the years, research into L2 teaching and learning has generally focused on learners at beginning and intermediate levels of proficiency. However, researchers have recently begun to turn their attention to L2 teaching and learning at advanced levels of proficiency (Byrnes, 2006; Byrnes & Maxim, 2004; Byrnes, Weger-Guntharp, & Sprang, 2006; Lever & Shekhtman, 2002). Whereas beginning and intermediate learners take language-oriented courses intended to promote overall L2 proficiency, advanced learners typically take content-based courses that, in

> ... researchers have recently begun to turn their attention to L2 teaching and learning at advanced levels of proficiency.

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theory, allow them to develop their knowledge of those specific content areas while becoming increasingly sophisticated in their use of L2.

Among the content-based courses included in many L2 curricula are third- and/or fourth-year courses in grammar. Some learners take such grammar courses out of interest, but most take them to fulfill a requirement for their major/minor in L2 or to prepare themselves for specific examinations (e.g., TOEFL or Praxis II). Regardless of their reasons for taking a grammar course, advanced learners have different needs and interests than their counterparts in beginning and intermediate courses. Consequently, grammar instruction at the advanced level should reflect those different needs and interests. In recognition of its increasing importance in many L2 curricula, teaching grammar to advanced learners is a growing field of research. This article seeks to add to the literature on this topic by reviewing various approaches to teaching advanced grammar that have been developed, and in some cases tested, by various scholars, and then describing how that research has informed the evolution of a specific advanced grammar course in Spanish that I designed.

> *Regardless of their reasons for taking a grammar course, advanced learners have different needs and interests than their counterparts in beginning and intermediate courses.*

Before proceeding, it is important to establish what is meant by the term *grammar* within the context of this discussion. Larsen-Freeman (2002, 2003) argues that, at the advanced level, "grammar not only consists of rules governing form; grammatical knowledge consists of knowing when to use the forms to convey meanings that match our intentions in particular contexts" (Larsen-Freeman, 2002, p. 105). She terms this knowing the rules and when to use them "a grammar of choice." Like Larsen-Freeman, Nunan (1998) also points out the important role that meaning plays when choosing among grammatical forms: "Once grammar is pressed into communicative service, decisions about what forms to use will be determined by the meanings that learners themselves wish to make" (p. 104).

For Zyzik (2008), grammar is not an area of knowledge, but rather a skill that serves as a "resource that allows speakers to communicate messages in ways that are accurate, meaningful and appropriate" (p. 435). Negueruela (2008, 2009) and Negueruela and Lantolf (2005) view grammar not as a series of rules or explanations, but rather as a set of categories of meaning, or concepts, that are expressed through grammatical features. For them, the role of grammar instruction is to help learners internalize these concepts so that they can become functional tools that allow learners to think through the semantic implications of their choices and thereby construct meaning. What all of these definitions of grammar seem to have in common is the notion that grammar is far more than a series of static, definitive rules and paradigms. They also share the notion that speakers and writers and hence, learners, play an active role in constructing meaning by making conscious

> *... grammar is far more than a series of static, definitive rules and paradigms.*

decisions about what grammatical forms to use in order to accurately express the meanings that they wish to convey.

Learners bring with them some very different assumptions about grammar and grammar rules when they enroll in advanced grammar courses. Shelly (1993) lists three such assumptions: (a) all rules of a language consist of concise, unambiguous sentences; (b) a grammar rule identifies a correct way to do something, thereby excluding all other possibilities; and (c) the simplified grammar rules learned in first- and second-year courses will apply at all levels of proficiency. These assumptions mean that advanced learners are often uncomfortable with the nuances in meaning associated with slight variations in or exceptions to familiar grammatical rules. For example, advanced learners of Spanish may find it difficult to comprehend contrasts such as *Ella es desconocida* (She is unknown) vs. *Ella está desconocida* (She is unrecognizable), *No creen que hayamos ganado el partido* (They don't believe that we have won the game) vs. *No creen que hemos ganado el partido* (We have won the game, but they don't believe it), or *los inteligentes estudiantes* (all of the students are intelligent) vs. *los estudiantes inteligentes* (some of the students are intelligent, others less so).

Consequently, the main goal of advanced grammar courses must be to reduce learners' dependence on simple rules by giving them tools that allow them to "continually expand and fine-tune their rules" (Shelly, 1993, p. 767). As Negueruela (2009) notes, this is a difficult but valuable process: "Constructing new understandings and challenging old conceptualizations are not easy; indeed, such work may lead to struggle and even crises. Nevertheless, these are productive crises if they promote the development of new understandings" (p. 163).

> *... the main goal of advanced grammar courses must be to reduce learners' dependence on simple rules by giving them tools that allow them to "continually expand and fine-tune their rules."*

Over the years there have been a number of studies that describe approaches to teaching grammar at the advanced level. By looking at these studies, we can examine how the different approaches encourage learners to be more intentional when choosing between different forms. In analyzing the approaches described and/or implemented in these studies, three broad patterns seem to emerge: (1) incorporating some degree of lecture or instructor-led discussion; (2) asking learners to analyze data and/or explain the meaning generated by a particular form in a given context; and (3) encouraging learners to apply grammatical knowledge in meaningful, but form-focused tasks. This review will also reveal that, in accordance with the goal of encouraging learners to reflect upon their language choices in order to express themselves more precisely, most of the studies focus on approaches that fall into the second and third categories.

## Approaches to teaching grammar to advanced learners

*Approaches that incorporate lecture or instructor-led discussion*

While many approaches to teaching advanced grammar may include lecture or instructor-led discussion as a prelude to other activities and tasks, there are

three studies that specifically highlight these traditional formats for presenting information. Shelly (1993) addresses the question of teaching grammar in advanced L2 composition courses. She observes that even though learners in such courses have studied grammar in previous courses, they still make errors with basic structures or errors related to finer points of grammar not covered in textbooks. According to Shelly, these kinds of problems should not be ignored and learners should be encouraged to move beyond the simple syntax that they have mastered in previous courses. In response to the continuing need to teach and review grammar in her composition course, Shelly developed an approach that she terms *rule reformulation*.

Rule reformulation consists of in-class activities in which learners are presented with ungrammatical sentences taken from compositions submitted by classmates along with the corrected versions of those sentences and additional grammatical examples taken from student compositions. After examining the ungrammatical and grammatical examples, the instructor guides the learners through a discussion in which they posit and test hypotheses about the rule(s) in question. Shelly indicates that these activities are not intended to be grammar lessons but rather should be viewed as linguistic puzzles for the class to solve together. Shelly cites several advantages associated with incorporating these types of activities into advanced L2 courses. First, this approach allows learners to develop a more active and pragmatic approach toward rules and rule reformulation. Second, the use of specific examples from the learners themselves helps reinforce the connection between linguistic precision and communicative goals. Finally, class periods do not have to revolve around grammar lectures, the discussions can be kept brief and to the point, and they can be conducted in the target language to a significant degree, if not entirely.

Negueruela and Lantolf (2005) examine the application of concept-based instruction (CBI) in the teaching of aspect to intermediate-advanced learners of Spanish as a Foreign Language. CBI involves explicitly and coherently presenting theoretical concepts to learners and then guiding them through a series of tasks designed to foster internalization and control of those concepts. Concepts, which are linked to formal properties of the language, are used to communicate cultural meanings and can be manipulated in accordance with the individual's communicative intent. One specific pedagogical model for implementing CBI is Systemic-Theoretical Instruction (STI), developed by Gal'perin (Gal'perin 1989,1992). Rather than relying on concrete rules, STI uses didactic models (e.g., charts, diagrams) to help learners understand and internalize the concept. Verbalization activities, in which learners are encouraged to explain concepts or grammatical choices to themselves, are another important element of STI.

In Negueruela and Lantolf (2005), an STI-based approach was adopted to teach the concept of aspect. In class, learners were presented with information related to the use of aspect in Spanish with the aid of didactic models. Outside of class, learners completed definitions of aspect and also recorded verbalization activities in which they reflected upon and explained their use of aspect in narratives they had constructed. Other data included performance-based tasks,

such as telling a story or writing a composition, which were designed to assess the development of aspect in the learners' speech and writing. Though far from developing a full understanding of aspect or the capacity to access this knowledge automatically, learners did demonstrate both conceptual development and improvement in performance. Negueruela found similar results when he adopted the same STI-based approach to teach the subjunctive/indicative contrast (2008), and in a subsequent study, he outlined how an STI-based approach could be used to teach the Spanish article system (2009).

Zyzik (2008) describes a third-year Spanish grammar course that is taught using a lecture/discussion format. Spanish 310 is a multi-section course that meets three days per week with an enrollment of approximately 150 learners per semester. One class session per week consists of a lecture given by a faculty member and attended by all learners enrolled in the course. The other two class sessions consist of discussion sessions led by graduate student teaching assistants (TAs) who are trained and supervised by the faculty member. While no textbook is used in this course, materials include lecture notes (to which learners have access as a reference), a course pack with activities to be used during the discussion sessions, and a novel in Spanish to be read outside of class.

The lectures, delivered in Spanish, are designed to expose learners to many examples of a grammatical structure, present a generalization that explains the examples adequately, and then apply that generalization to new contexts. These presentations are supplemented by pictures and diagrams presented via PowerPoint. During the lectures, learners take notes, comment on examples, and complete exercises. Materials are posted on the course website and learners are expected to print these documents and bring them to class.

During the discussion sections, learners are encouraged to apply their knowledge of grammar via a variety of form-focused communicative tasks such as dictogloss, decision-making, and consciousness-raising.[1] The discussion sections also include more open-ended activities related to the novel such as opinion questions and semi-structured discussions, both of which are designed to highlight a particular grammatical structure and/or provide opportunities for learners to use it. Throughout the discussion, TAs may provide corrective feedback to learner errors, but they are to avoid repeating the traditional rule presentation that learners have already seen during the week's lecture.

According to Zyzik, there are several benefits to the lecture/discussion format. First, a high degree of coordination and collaboration between the faculty member and the TAs ensures uniformity of instruction across sections. In addition, given that the faculty member, a specialist in Spanish linguistics, prepares and delivers the lectures, the grammar is presented in a descriptively accurate way. One disadvantage is the possibility of dedicating too much time to explicit grammar explanations during the discussion sessions. Another disadvantage is the disconnect that some learners experience between what they retain from the lectures and their ability to apply that information during the discussion session activities. Therefore, though the lecture/discussion format appears to be

an attractive option for teaching advanced grammar courses, especially for large classes, a number of concerns remain unresolved.

*Approaches that ask learners to analyze data or explain the meaning of forms*

In addition to including a significant role for the instructor, the approaches described in the three studies reviewed in the previous section also include tasks that ask learners to analyze data or explain the meaning of forms in particular contexts. Many other approaches are based on similar tasks. Storch (1999) and García Mayo (2002) looked at the performance of intermediate to advanced learners of ESL and EFL, respectively, on a variety of grammar-based tasks. Storch (1999) found that the texts completed by learners in pairs were more grammatically accurate than the same texts completed individually. This was most likely due to the fact that, when working in pairs, learners took more time to complete the task, they seemed more motivated to focus on grammatical accuracy, they revised their work, and their own verbalizations provided an additional source of feedback. However, there was some variation across targeted grammatical items. Discussion and conscious reflection seemed to enhance the accuracy of less-complex structures (e.g., derivational and nominal morphology), but led to incorrect choices in the case of more complex structures (e.g., articles). This is likely due to the fact that it is relatively easy for learners to make correct decisions about which forms to use when the rules are clear, precise, and finite, as in the case of morphology. Making correct decisions is much more challenging when the rules are complex or ambiguous, as in the case of article use.

García Mayo (2002) examined the quantity and nature of attention to form generated across five different tasks completed in pairs. Attention to form was measured by determining the number of language related episodes (LRE), that is, conversational turns dealing with language form, vocabulary, and punctuation, that occurred during completion of the tasks. The percentage of LREs to total conversational turns varied from 14%-59%. The majority (75%-100%) of LREs were related to language form rather than vocabulary or punctuation. In other words, learners spent a good deal of time talking about things other than language; however, when they did talk about language, they tended to focus heavily on form. Despite this attention to form, learners did not necessarily focus on the grammatical features targeted by the task. Furthermore, they were not always able to offer an explanation for their language choices, which indicated that they might not have had the knowledge they needed to discuss and explain their choices. Both studies seem to affirm the viability of learners working together to resolve language questions. However, the results also point out three important caveats: (1) not all tasks are equally effective in promoting grammatical accuracy/focus on form, (2) learners may not always stay on task, and (3) learners may lack the knowledge needed to complete the tasks.

Strauss, Lee, and Ahn (2006) outline how one might incorporate conceptual grammar into materials designed to present completive constructions to advanced learners of Korean as a Foreign Language. Conceptual grammar, as defined by Strauss et al., is an "alternative approach to the teaching of grammar that combines

three theoretical-methodological paradigms: corpus, discourse analysis and cognitive linguistics" (p. 186). An extensive corpus of written and oral data was analyzed in order to identify and extract samples of extended discourse containing the target structures. These excerpts were further analyzed in order to identify patterns in the use of the target structures. Based on this second analysis, the researchers formulated alternative, context-based explanations regarding the use of the target structures.

A set of written instructional materials containing excerpts from the corpus, exercises, and the context-based grammar explanations was created and distributed to native Korean-speaking teachers and advanced learners of Korean as a Foreign Language. Some of the exercises asked learners to analyze or explain the meaning of certain forms. Other exercises asked learners to write original sentences using the target forms. Upon completing the exercises, learners demonstrated both an understanding of the patterns underlying the target forms and an ability to apply them. Qualitative feedback regarding the conceptual grammar approach and the materials themselves was also generally positive. Strauss et al. conclude that a conceptual grammar approach could be adapted and applied to a wide range of constructions across languages and levels of proficiency. In particular, they note that for Spanish, such an approach would work well for examining the preterite/imperfect contrast or the presence/absence of the pronoun se in non-reflexive contexts. Both of these topics are commonly covered in advanced Spanish classes. Other topics related to Spanish that might lend themselves to a conceptual grammar approach might include the use/omission of articles and the duplication of object pronouns [e.g., *Mandé una carta a Juan* (I sent a letter to Juan)/*Le mandé una carta a Juan* (*To him I sent a letter to Juan)].

Thorne and Reinhardt (2008) outline an approach based on bridging activities, which are designed to develop advanced learners' language awareness across a wide variety of new media formats (e.g., instant messaging, synchronous chat, blogs, wikis, fanfiction). Learners choose appropriate texts that reflect their experiences, needs, and interests; then, with the guidance of the instructor, they analyze their chosen texts and discuss how the discursive and linguistic features of these texts reflect "the social contexts in which they function (genre), and the social realities specific language choices will tend to instantiate" (Thorne & Reinhardt, 2008, p. 563). The final phase of this approach consists of learners joining Internet communities and creating texts themselves. This allows the cycle to continue by encouraging learners to observe and analyze new texts. Through these bridging activities, learners are able to familiarize themselves with the conventions of various forms of digital communication in L2, which, given the role of technology in their lives, may be far more relevant to them than the traditional focus on print-based texts.

Liu and Jiang (2009) analyze the use of a corpus-based lexicogrammatical approach to teach grammar to advanced ESL/EFL learners. Rather than separating grammar learning from vocabulary learning, a lexicogrammatical approach to grammar instruction is based on the notion that grammar and vocabulary are often learned simultaneously and should therefore be taught jointly (Liu & Jiang,

2009, p. 62). One pedagogical tool that combines grammar and vocabulary learning is corpus analysis. Corpus analysis consists of having learners examine sets of samples of authentic target language discourse in order to discover generalizations about grammar and vocabulary usage, to test their hypotheses, and to apply rules that they have studied.

With the aim of testing the feasibility and effectiveness of corpus analysis, Liu and Jiang designed a series of tasks and assignments that required learners to search an electronic corpus of English language discourse in order to address specific questions (e.g., usage differences between words), to correct errors on assignments, and to analyze the language found in reading passages. As they completed the tasks, learners were asked to record and analyze their findings. Liu and Jiang conclude that the use of corpus analysis "can enhance students' language awareness, improve their command of lexicogrammatical rules and usage patterns, increase their appreciation of context in language use and their critical understanding of grammar, and promote discovery learning, thus making learning more effective" (p. 75).

Along with these benefits, Liu and Jiang note that there are challenges that need to be addressed before this approach could be widely adopted. These challenges include expanding the training that learners receive so that they are able to conduct more effective and efficient searches, addressing problems with technology and access to corpora, adopting strategies to help learners deal with the linguistic complexity of authentic discourse and unknown vocabulary, and motivating learners who resist discovery learning.

Finally, Mojica-Díaz and Sánchez-López (2010) reject more traditional approaches to teaching grammar based on explicit instruction and drills in favor of a constructivist approach. The main tenet of constructivism is the notion that human beings construct mental models of reality based on prior knowledge, experience, and social interaction. As applied to advanced grammar instruction, this approach involves learners working with authentic, discourse-level texts to classify and analyze grammatical elements, predict grammatical rules, and then construct new and original texts utilizing what they have discovered. By analyzing discourse rather than individual sentences, learners can gain greater awareness of such things as pragmatic regularities, cohesion, and communication strategies in a range of registers and genres.

Along with the use of discourse-level texts as the main focus of study, another key element of the constructivist approach proposed by Mojica-Díaz and Sánchez-López is active student involvement in the learning process. By taking an active role in generating questions, making associations, generating hypotheses, and debating conclusions, students are encouraged to take greater control of their own learning and develop their analytical and critical-thinking skills. Though Mojica-Díaz and Sánchez-López did not empirically examine the effectiveness of their constructivist approach, this approach is intriguing, carefully designed, and well supported by theory. As a result, it represents a promising new direction for advanced grammar courses.

**Using research to design advanced grammar courses**

*Approaches that encourage learners to apply grammar in meaningful, form-focused tasks*

With the exception of Shelly (1993) and Liu and Jiang (2009), all of the approaches presented here encourage learners to apply target structures in meaningful, form-focused tasks. In the case of Strauss et al. (2006), this was limited to the sentence level, but the other approaches focused on more extended discourse, at least in some of the tasks that were assigned to learners. In particular, the approaches described by Negeruela (2005, 2008, 2009), Thorne and Reinhardt (2008), and Mojica-Díaz and Sánchez-López (2010) encourage learners to create new and original discourse-level texts utilizing the target structures. Despite the many differences between the tasks utilized in the various approaches, it is clear that applying grammar knowledge is no longer limited to highly structured, sentence-level tasks. More current approaches to teaching advanced grammar are pushing learners to apply their knowledge in more spontaneous, complex, and realistic ways.

> *... the approaches described [above] can be grouped into three broad categories: (1) incorporating some degree of instructor-led discussion or lecture; (2) asking learners analyze to data and/or explain the meaning generated by a particular form in a given context; and (3) encouraging learners to apply grammatical knowledge in a variety of meaningful, but form-focused tasks.*

As noted in the introduction to this section, the approaches described can be grouped into three broad categories: (1) incorporating some degree of instructor-led discussion or lecture; (2) asking learners analyze to data and/or explain the meaning generated by a particular form in a given context; and (3) encouraging learners to apply grammatical knowledge in a variety of meaningful, but form-focused tasks. What is evident from the previous discussion is that classifying each individual approach is difficult. There is a great deal of overlap in that most of the approaches fit into two or even all three of the categories. Given that they also outline specific tasks and techniques, the studies reviewed above can serve as a rich source of information and inspiration for instructors responsible for designing advanced grammar courses. With the aim of illustrating how this might be done, the following section describes an effort to incorporate research findings into the ongoing development of a specific advanced grammar course in Spanish — namely, Spanish 450 at the University of North Dakota.

## Description of Spanish 450

In terms of design and format, Spanish 450 closely resembles Spanish 310, the course described in Zyzik (2008); however, Spanish 450 is a fourth-year course and is therefore somewhat more advanced. Spanish 450 also differs from Spanish 310 in that only one section is taught per year rather than multiple sections per semester. As the lone instructor for Spanish 450, I am responsible for all aspects of the course. On the other hand, like Spanish 310, Spanish 450 has been conceptualized as a combination of lecture and discussion, though the lectures

and discussions take place within a single class period rather than on different days. In addition, both courses are designed and taught by faculty members who are specialists in either linguistics or applied linguistics.

Spanish 450 is a three-credit course, which is equal to 150 minutes per week over a 16-week semester. The course typically meets two days a week for 75 minutes each session. Lectures, discussions, and readings are exclusively in Spanish.2 The prerequisite course, Spanish 309, is a composition course. Learners majoring in Spanish may choose to take either Phonetics or Advanced Grammar as part of their program; however, for learners seeking to become certified to teach Spanish, both Phonetics and Advanced Grammar are required for licensure. There are also two tracks for the Spanish minor, one of which requires learners to take both Phonetics and Advanced Grammar. Enrollments in Spanish 450 have been remarkably stable at between 13-15 learners each year.

Several of the topics covered in the course have been recognized as being particularly problematic for English speakers learning Spanish: *ser* vs. *estar* (the equivalents of "to be"), preterite vs. imperfect, indicative vs. subjunctive, and personal pronouns. Additional topics covered include the semantic consequences of adjective placement [e.g., *las mujeres bonitas* (some of the women are beautiful, others less so)/*las bonitas mujeres* (all of the women are beautiful)]; use/omission of definite and indefinite articles [e.g., *Tengo el coche* (I have the car), *Tengo un coche* (I have a car), *Tengo coche* (I have access to a car)]; relative pronouns; and *por* vs. *para* (often translated as "for" or "by"). Some of these topics are covered, albeit in a somewhat simplified manner, in beginning and intermediate textbooks (e.g., *ser/estar*, preterite/imperfect, subjunctive). Other topics receive only cursory treatment in such textbooks and therefore may be less familiar to these learners (e.g., relative pronouns, use/omission of articles). With respect to the more familiar topics in particular, the objective is to take learners to the next level by showing them that the rules that they have learned previously are not as straightforward as they are often portrayed to be in textbooks and that the speaker or writer can choose certain forms depending on his/her communicative intent.

For several years, the textbook used in Spanish 450 was *Gramática española: Análisis y práctica*, 3rd edition (King & Suñer, 2008). It remains one of the few textbooks available for a course of this nature and for the most part, it corresponded well to the course objectives, especially because it frequently highlights the changes in meaning associated with the use of different forms. However, it is also a very dense text that is heavily dependent on presenting rules of thumb and exceptions. As Negueruela and Lantolf (2005) point out, such rules "fail to reflect the full meaning of the concept and therefore lack coherence and are not organized in a way that promotes understanding, control and internalization" (p. 5). Negueruela (2008, 2009) offers similar criticisms of the presentations of rules commonly found in textbooks and classroom explanations. Other on-going concerns with King and Suñer (2008) include the high level of language used, the complexity of some exercises, and the overall layout of the book.

In the most recent revision of the course, a new textbook was adopted; namely *Investigación de gramática*, 2nd edition (Lunn & DeCesaris, 2007). This

text was seen as more streamlined and accessible. In addition, the authors created a variety of activities to be done in and outside of class, thereby providing a good springboard for in-class discussion. The text does not present lists of rules, but rather focuses on presenting a few general ideas or concepts that can be applied in a range of contexts. Finally, it focuses even more than King and Suñer (2008) on the different meanings engendered by the use of different forms. As will be discussed below, changing the textbook appears to have had a positive effect on learners' performance.

With regard to assessment, learners in Spanish 450 are evaluated based largely upon homework assignments, class participation, and tests. In addition, learners are divided into groups, with each group being responsible for preparing the review before one of the unit tests. These student-led reviews were incorporated into the course for various reasons: (a) they make learners accountable for learning at least a portion of the material well enough to present it to their classmates, (b) they allow learners to approach the material in their own way, and (c) they give learners who are prospective teachers an opportunity to present material to a class.

The final component of each learner's grade is a 15-20 minute presentation given at the end of the semester and generally related to one of the topics that have been covered in the course. In anticipation of their student teaching experience, many learners choose the option of preparing a lesson plan and presenting it to the class. Other learners choose to examine a particular topic from an historical or comparative perspective. On occasion, learners have chosen to do a form of corpus analysis whereby they analyze how particular forms are used in music, literature, or journalistic writing and then compare what they observe with the rules presented in textbooks and/or reference grammars.

In terms of its design and format, the approach taken in Spanish 450 is essentially a cognitive one in which each class session consists of a lecture combined with discussion and/or practice activities. Such an approach has its advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, researchers such as Andrews (2007), DeKeyser (1998), Ellis (2002, 2006), Hall (1998), Klapper and Rees (2003), Larsen-Freeman (1997), Lever and Atwell (2002), Long (1988), Manning (1996), and Scott (1990) point to the benefits of explicit instruction and practice, especially when the rules are complex, the target forms are infrequent or less salient in the input, or access to L2 input is limited. On the other hand, such an approach may be less effective and/or less interesting, engaging, and motivating for the learners (Manning, 1996; Mojica-Díaz & Sánchez-López, 2010; Shelly, 1993). Despite these disadvantages, a cognitive approach seems appropriate for a course like Spanish 450, which is specifically designed to hone learners' linguistic knowledge and not their communication skills. Moreover, as Zyzik (2008) argues, "the lecture/ discussion combination, if used effectively, can harness the potential of explicit instruction" (p. 437).

The lecture component of each class generally consists of reviewing, explaining, summarizing, and expanding upon material presented in the textbook. In many cases, I supplement the lectures with handouts and transparencies. Based on the work of other scholars, one change that could be made in an effort

to improve the effectiveness of the lecture portion of Spanish 450 would be to incorporate more visual schema (Zyzik, 2008) or didactic models (Negueruela & Lantolf, 2005; Negueruela, 2008, 2009) into the presentations. Lunn and DeCesaris (2007) include some visuals in their textbook to illustrate particular concepts, principally drawings and cartoons. Additional examples of visual schema that could be incorporated into the lectures are shown in Appendix A. These types of visual representations would supplement the verbal explanations provided in the textbook, thereby providing learners with two different modes of accessing the information. At the same time, they would help the learners internalize grammatical concepts and generalize their use across a wide range of communicative contexts and situations (Negueruela, 2008, p. 211). There is little doubt that visual schema or didactic models would enhance the lectures; however, it remains to be determined whether they are most effective when prepared by the instructor or constructed by the learners under the guidance of the instructor (Negueruela & Lantolf, 2005, p. 8).

In addition to incorporating visual schema and didactic models, the lectures could be improved and enlivened by presenting the use of grammatical forms in context in authentic materials, as suggested by a number of the studies reviewed earlier. Texts from different genres and media could be used, including excerpts of literary and journalistic writing, websites, blogs, music, and video clips. The inclusion of authentic materials would provide the learners with additional input. It would also the target grammar more relevant to the learners by showing them how it is used in real-life situations. Finally, having students work on tasks based on different types of authentic materials would be a good way to inject more variety into the course.

The second element of each class, the discussion/practice tasks, are designed to expand upon the lecture and are intended to encourage learners to delve more deeply into the material. According to Zyzik (2008), these types of tasks are key to the effective use of the lecture/discussion combination because they complement the lectures by giving learners opportunities to apply what they learn in the lectures while hearing and using the language in meaningful contexts. Above and beyond providing learners with opportunities to hear and use the language in meaningful contexts, tasks and activities developed for the discussion/practice component of a grammar course should "stimulate reflection that will shape knowledge about the rules" (DeKeyser, 1998, p. 62). The tasks created for Spanish 450 represent attempts to accomplish both objectives.

As noted previously, King and Suñer (2008) provide numerous examples such as *Ella es bonita* (She is beautiful)/*Ella está bonita* (She looks beautiful) and *Anoche bailamos en la fiesta* (Last night, we danced at the party)/*Anoche bailábamos en la fiesta* (Last night we were dancing at the party) to illustrate how using different forms in the same context can influence meaning. In early iterations of Spanish 450, little specific attention was given to these types of contrasts in class, though learners were asked to explain such contrasts on homework activities and tests. When revising the course for the spring of 2010, I decided to introduce more in-class tasks that required students to analyze and explain these types of contrasts. It

was hoped that this change would improve learner participation and engagement as well as their understanding of the ways in which grammatical choices can affect meaning.

Following Storch (1999) and García Mayo (2002), the additional in-class tasks consist of learners working in pairs or small groups on tasks that I have prepared. Each task, in the form of a worksheet, is distributed to the learners. I then divide the class into groups and assign each group a different aspect of the task. Once the allotted time has elapsed, each group presents its conclusions to the class supplemented by comments or clarifications from me as needed. Just as with information gap and jigsaw tasks, learners are expected to pay attention to each group's presentation and use that information to fill in the missing information on their worksheet. The completed worksheet can then serve as a study guide that learners can use to prepare for the upcoming unit test.

Examples of two of the activities that I created are shown in appendices B and C. The task in Appendix B asks learners to focus on the different meanings engendered by the use of preterite or imperfect. The task in Appendix C asks learners to analyze and explain the uses of *por* and *para*, not only in the examples provided by the instructor but also in examples that they themselves produce. What guided the creation of these and other similar tasks was a desire to encourage learners to think critically about their grammatical choices and help them become less dependent on simplistic, prescriptive rules. In addition, because learners have to discuss and then present their conclusions to the class, it was thought that these tasks might allow learners to hear and use the language in meaningful contexts as suggested by Zyzik (2008), at least during the presentation phase of the task.

A number of more production-oriented tasks were assigned to students, either as homework or for oral review in class. These tasks included translating verbs or phrases, writing original sentences that contained specific elements or according to specific criteria, inventing contexts in which given sentences make sense, completing sentences in a logical way, providing appropriate commands for a series of situations, rewriting sentences to express a specific meaning or provide an alterative means of expressing the same information, and writing sentences with non-restrictive relative clauses to describe people and fictional characters. However, despite the variety of tasks assigned, it could be argued that they do not represent meaningful communication due to their highly structured nature and to the fact that they do not go beyond the word or sentence level. These tasks were adopted because they are accessible and allow learners to apply concepts in smaller, more manageable pieces. However, advanced learners should be challenged to go outside of their comfort zone; therefore, the nature of the tasks assigned is something that needs to be addressed as the course continues to evolve.

Notwithstanding these questions regarding the meaningfulness of the tasks, a descriptive comparison of learner's performance suggests that including more in-class tasks such as those in appendices B and C may have had a positive effect on learners' overall performance and especially on their ability to comprehend and explain contrasts such as those mentioned above.

**Table 1**. Outline of learner performance in Spanish 450 from 2009-2011

| Year (N) | Test 1 | Test 2 | Test 3 | Test 4 | Homework | Final Exam | Final Grade |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **2009 (13)** | 79.0 | 77.3 | 70.8 | 79.1 | 86.7 | 75.5 | 83.1 |
| **2010 (14)** | 80.0 | 85.0 | 76.1 | 81.4 | 82.3 | 84.6 | 86.4 |
| **2011 (13)** | 87.3 | 92.6 | 88.1 | 87.8 | 86.7 | 88.9 | 90.8 |

As shown in Table 1, learners' test scores and final grades increased after the addition of the additional in-class activities in 2010. Most notably, the average score on the final exam rose by 9.1%, which is due, at least in part, to a 4.6 point improvement in the average score attained on the section in which learners were asked to explain the difference between pairs of sentences. These pairs of sentences highlighted contrasts between *ser/estar*, preterite/imperfect, indicative/subjunctive, and adjective placement, and the average score on this section increased from 19.2 to 23.8 out of a possible 24 points. The one exception to this overall positive trend was the average homework score, which decreased by 4.4% from 2009 to 2010. One explanation for this may be that students in 2009 were simply more conscientious about completing and turning in homework assignments than students in 2010.

Table 1 also shows that the adoption of the new textbook, *Investigación de gramática* (2nd ed.) (Lunn & DeCesaris, 2007), led to continued improvement in test scores and final grades. In addition, the average homework grade rose again, to the same level as 2009. Given the very high score attained by students in 2010 on the final exam section that asked students to explain the differences between sentences, it is not surprising that there would be a slight drop in the average score on a similar section on the final exam given in 2011. In the latter case, the average score was 23.2 out of 24 points. The main difference in this section on the two exams was that the 2011 final exam included sentences focusing on object pronouns, the pronoun se, relative pronouns, and *por/para*, in addition to the contrasts mentioned previously. Taken together, these data reveal a fairly steady pattern of improvement in learners' performance as Span 450 has evolved.

These quantitative findings correspond to those of more qualitative data. Each time the course is offered, students complete an exit questionnaire in which they are asked to list what they have learned about different topics covered in the course and the areas in which they have experienced the most and the least improvement. In each of the years between 2009 and 2011, students were able to list traditional rules of thumb that they had learned or that had become clearer to them. However, in 2010, after the additional in-class activities were included, learners were more

likely to specifically articulate that they had learned that meaning can vary according to form or that speakers use specific forms to indicate specific meanings. In 2011, after the adoption of Lunn and DeCesaris (2007), learners were more likely to mention generalizations presented in the text (sometimes verbatim), in addition to rules of thumb. Based on these findings, learners appear to have gained a better understanding of the role that form can play in determining meaning and of the ways that speakers/writers can manipulate form according to their communicative intent. In addition, learners seem better able to recall general patterns or concepts that may help reduce their dependence on lists of specific rules and their exceptions. Here again, it appears that changes made to Spanish 450 over the past three years have been beneficial to learners.

Despite the positive results of the changes already made, the literature suggests at least three additional changes that could/should be incorporated into future revisions of Spanish 450. First, as noted previously, all of the current tasks, activities, and tests have focused on meaning at the sentence level. This constitutes a significant limitation of the course and a concerted effort must be made to include discourse level texts as suggested by Mojica-Díaz and Sánchez-López (2010), among others. Another limitation of the course is the highly structured nature of many of the tasks. More challenging and more meaningful tasks must be incorporated into the course; for example, decision-making tasks along the lines of those described in Zyzik (2008), role-play activities designed to highlight specific structures, in-class compositions, and analyzing the use of specific forms extended authentic discourse. The third change would be to incorporate homework assignments involving recorded verbalizations as described by Negueruela and Lantolf (2005) and Negueruela (2008, 2009). According to Negueruela (2008), the effectiveness of in-class verbalization activities, such as those developed for Spanish 450, may be limited due to time constraints and the social nature of the classroom setting (p. 112). Having to record and submit verbalizations outside of class may lead to more detailed and more consistent explanations. Such assignments would be easy to incorporate into the course via such applications as the Voice Board feature of the Blackboard classroom management platform.

## Conclusion

In the past two decades, more and more research has been devoted to the teaching of grammar to advanced L2 learners. To illustrate the growing breadth of this research, nine studies, encompassing a range of approaches, methods, and languages, were reviewed. Based on this review, three basic patterns emerged with regard to approach: (1) incorporating some degree of instructor-led discussion or lecture; (2) asking learners to analyze data and/or explain the meaning generated by a particular form in a given context; and (3) encouraging learners to apply grammatical knowledge in a variety of meaningful, but form-focused tasks. This review of previous studies was followed by the description of a specific advanced Spanish grammar course that combines the first two categories by including both

a lecture component and a discussion component consisting of tasks in which learners must analyze, discuss, and explain the meanings represented by certain forms. This section also outlined how findings from the research cited have been or could be incorporated when revising the course. The most notable change must be offering more opportunities for learners in Spanish 450 to apply what they have learned in meaningful production-based tasks at the discourse level.

Beyond simply highlighting the growing body of research related to teaching advanced grammar and reaffirming that it is both possible and beneficial for instructors to integrate research findings when creating or revising their courses, this article sought to demonstrate how this process has affected the evolution of one specific advanced grammar course in Spanish. This evolution has not been easy, nor fast. Change has been incremental at best; however, it appears that every change has improved the course. As the amount and variety of research continues to grow, instructors will be able to tap into a steady supply of new ideas when designing advanced grammar courses that best suit their situation and best meet the learners' needs and interests.

## Acknowledgments

## Notes

1. Dictogloss activities consist of learners working together to reconstruct a text containing examples of the target structures read by the instructor. As they reconstruct the text, learners help one another address questions regarding the structures. The reconstructed texts are then compared with the original text. Decision-making activities consist of learners working together to reach a single solution to a problem by arriving at a mutual decision. Tasks are designed so that the target structures are naturally embedded in the interactions. Conscious-raising activities consist of learners working together to examine grammatical and ungrammatical examples containing the target structures in order to develop generalizations regarding those structures.

2. Warford (2010) presents several arguments for using the target language when teaching complex grammar in the FL context: (1) it mirrors what happens in L2 contexts where learners may not share a common native language; (2) use of the native language may actually impede learning of the target language; and (3) learners are much less concerned than their instructors about the use of the target language in class—a majority of learners indicate that they understand most, if not all, of what their instructor says in the target language. Warford then outlines several      strategies designed to facilitate comprehension of material presented in the target language.

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## Appendix A

**These samples represent possible visual schema for Spanish 450.**

I. Sample visual schema highlighting contrasts between preterite and imperfect:

| **Inicio** (Beginning) | **Medio** (Middle) | **Fin** (End) |
|---|---|---|
| **Pretérito** | **Imperfecto** | **Pretérito** |
| *Llovió a las ocho.* (It began to rain at 8:00.) | *Llovía cuando salí.* (It was raining when I left.) | *Llovió por media hora.* (It rained for half an hour.) |
| *Me puse enferma.* (I got sick.) | *Estaba enferma.* (I was sick.) | *Estuve enferma.* (I was sick, but am now well.) |

II. Sample visual schema highlighting contrasts between *por/para* (for, by):

*ANTICIPAR* **(ANTICIPATE)**

*PARA* ⟶ *meta, destino, propósito, fecha límite*
(goal, destination, purpose, deadline)

*MIRAR ATRÁS* **(LOOK BACK)**

*causa, motivo* ⟵ *POR*
(cause, motive)

III. Sample visual schema highlighting contrast in adjective placement:
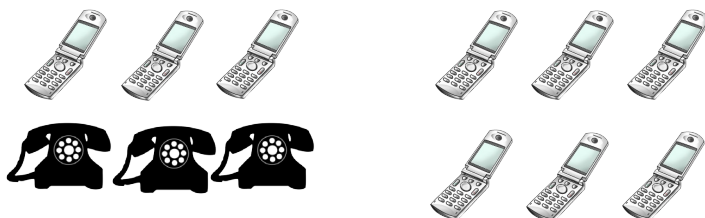
*Los teléfonos modernos*
(Some of the phones are modern, others are not)

*Los modernos teléfonos*
(All of the phones are modern)

## Appendix B

**This task reviews different meanings implied by the use of the preterite or the imperfect.**

### *Pretérito/Imperfecto*    (Preterite/Imperfect)

*Expliquen la diferencia entre estos pares de oraciones*
(Explain the difference between these pairs of sentences)

1. *Esta mañana tomé un café.*
   (This morning, I drank a cup of coffee.)
   *Esta mañana tomaba un café cuando llegó Pedro.*
   (This morning, I was drinking a cup of coffee when Pedro arrived.)

2. *Todos los veranos fuimos a la casa de mis abuelos.*
   (Every summer we went to my grandparents' house.)
   *Todos los veranos íbamos a la casa de mis abuelos.*
   (Every summer we would go/used to go to my grandparents' house, but we don't go anymore.)

3. *Anoche estudiamos por cuatro horas.*
   (Last night, we studied for four hours.)
   *Anoche estudiábamos cuando se cortó la electricidad.*
   (Last night, we were studying when the electricity went out.)

4. *El sábado pasado, Juan vino a visitarnos.*
   (Juan came to see us last Saturday.)
   *El sábado pasado, Juan venía a visitarnos, pero se puso enfermo.*
   (John was coming to see us last Saturday, but he got sick.)

5. *¿Pudiste terminar la tarea para hoy?*
   (Did you manage to finish the homework for today?)
   *¿Podías leer antes de ir al kínder?*
   (Could you read before you went to kindergarten?)

6. *Ellos se conocieron en la escuela secundaria.*
   (They met in high school.)
   *Ellos se conocían en la escuela secundaria.*
   (They knew each other in high school.)

7. *Ayer llovió mucho.*
   (It rained a lot yesterday and then it stopped.)
   *Ayer llovía mucho.*
   (It was raining a lot yesterday.)

8. *Vi la película «Up in the Air» y me gustó mucho.*
(I saw the film "Up in the Air" and I liked it a lot.)
*Cuando era joven, me gustaban las novelas de Harry Potter.*
(When I was young, I liked the Harry Potter novels.)

9. *Marcos estuvo en México por tres semanas.*
(Marcos was in Mexico for three weeks and then he came home.)
*Marcos estaba en México por tres semanas cuando se rompió la pierna.*
(Marcos was/had been in Mexico for three weeks when he broke his leg.)

10. *A las ocho cenamos aunque mi papá todavía no había llegado.*
(We went ahead and ate dinner at 8:00 even though my father hadn't arrived yet.)
*A las ocho cenábamos pero nos interrumpió la llamada de un vendedor.*
(At 8:00, we were eating dinner but we were interrupted by a call from a salesman.)

\*Activity can be done individually or by assigning each item to a different pair of students, with each pair explaining the contrast for the assigned item to the rest of the class.

## Appendix C

**This task reviews the contrast between *por* and *para***

Grupo 1:

A. *Expliquen/Presenten el uso de **para** en estos casos.*
(Explain/Present the use of *para* in these cases.)

1. *No te preocupes. No es para tanto.*
(Don't worry. It's not such a big deal.)  [An idiomatic use of para presented in the text.]
2. *¿De qué puerta sale el avión para Quito?*
(From which gate does the plane for Quito depart?)
3. *Espero trabajar para Microsoft cuando me gradúe.*
(I hope to work for Microsoft when I graduate.)
4. *Compré un regalo para mi mamá.*
(I bought a present for my mom.)
5. *Juan estudia para abogado.*
(Juan is studying to become a lawyer.)
6. *Para artista, no sabe dibujar muy bien.*
(For an artist, he/she doesn't know how to draw very well.)
7. *Cuando el policía interrogó al sospechoso, no estaba para mentiras.*
(When the police officer interrogated the suspect, he/she was in not in the mood for lies.)
8. *Tienes que entregar la composición para las tres esta tarde.*
(You have to turn in the composition by 3:00 this afternoon.)

9. *Estas copas no son para vino sino champaña.*
   (These are champagne flutes, not wine glasses.)
10. *Hay que reservar una mesa para la fiesta.*
    (It is necessary to reserve a table for the party.)

B. Escriban cinco oraciones originales con ***para*** y preséntenlas al otro grupo para que ellos expliquen el uso de ***para*** en cada caso.
(Write five original sentences with *para* and present them to the other group so that they might explain the use of *para* in each case.)

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Grupo 2:

A. *Expliquen/Presenten el uso de **por** en estos casos.*
(Explain/Present the use of *por* in these cases.)

1. *Me gusta mucho caminar por las calles del Viejo San Juan.*
   (I really like walking along the streets of Old San Juan.)
2. *Llegaron tarde por el tráfico.*
   (They arrived late because of the traffic.)
3. *Mis padres vivieron en Cali por casi 20 años.*
   (My parents lived in Cali for almost 20 years.)
4. *Los soldados luchan por su patria.*
   (Soldiers fight for their country.)
5. *Estas fotos fueron sacadas por mi padre.*
   (These photos were taken by my father.)
6. *Debe haber un restaurante mexicano por aquí.*
   (There should be a Mexican restaurant around here somewhere.)
7. *¿Cuánto pagaste por ese anillo?*
   (How much did you pay for that ring?)
8. *Por lo general, prefiero descansar en casa los viernes por la noche.*
   (Generally, I like to rest at home on Friday night.)
9. *Ve rápido a la carnicería por jamón y pollo.*
   (Run to the butcher shop for ham and chicken.)
10. *Mucha gente me toma por mi hermana porque nos parecemos mucho.*
    (Many people mistake me for my sister because we look a lot alike.)

B. Escriban cinco oraciones originales con ***por*** y preséntenlas al otro grupo para que ellos expliquen el uso de ***por*** en cada caso.
(Write five original sentences with *por* and present them to the other group so that they might explain the use of *por* in each case.)

**Using research to design advanced grammar courses**

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# Reviews
### *Edited by Thomas S. Conner, St. Norbert College*

The Northeast Conference makes available in its Review evaluations of both products and opportunities of interest to foreign language educators. These evaluations are written by language professionals at all levels and representing all languages. The opinions presented by reviewers and by respondents (publishers, tour operators, web masters, association leaders, etc.) are their own and in no way reflect approval or disapproval by the Northeast Conference.

We will accept reviews of

- Software
- Videos and films
- Textbooks, instructional packages, and ancillaries
- Websites
- Grant opportunities

- Programs of study, both abroad and in this country, targeting both educators and students
- Reference materials
- Other

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## Arabic

**Chekayri, Abdellah. *An Introduction to Moroccan Arabic and Culture*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2011. Includes: textbook and DVD. ISBN: 978-1-58901-693-4. Pp. 502. $59.95.**

To say that Abdellah Chekayri's book, *An Introduction to Moroccan Arabic and Culture*, fills a void in the field of Arabic language is an understatement. Until recently, teaching materials for colloquial varieties (or dialects) of Arabic have lagged far behind those available for Modern Standard Arabic, and nowhere has that gap been more pronounced than for Maghribi (aka the Moroccan) dialect. Several new programs have rectified this problem for other major colloquial varieties—most notably the excellent *Kallimni 'Arabi* series for Egyptian Arabic published by American University in Cairo Press. Now, students and teachers of Arabic, finally, have access to a text for Moroccan Arabic, one that is compatible in quality and approach to the major texts for Standard Arabic. This text comes at a more critical time than ever, since Morocco has become one of the most popular locations for Arabic study abroad programs, and adapting to the Moroccan dialect is typically the major challenge for students. Thus, it is no surprise that this most comprehensive and accessible Moroccan Arabic package comes from Professor Abdellah Chekayri, who has long experience with study abroad programs in Morocco and knows well the challenges and needs of students in those programs.

As the title suggests, *An Introduction to Moroccan Arabic and Culture* (henceforth *IMAC*) presents an integrated approach to language and culture. Its fourteen chapters cover subjects, such as geography and weather, shopping, traveling, Ramadan, restaurants, and cafés, with an emphasis on what a student will actually encounter and be expected to do in Morocco. Very practical items—such as actual railroad schedules, Moroccan currency and road signs—are the primary topics of study. The text includes

many authentic color photographs of everything from Moroccan foods to clothing and cultural locations. Extensive video and audio segments on the DVD provide cultural background, many of which are excerpts from lectures in English about Moroccan culture and history. The core of each chapter is a series of three dialogues, accompanied by supporting exercises and presentation of essential grammar. The first three lessons include both Arabic script and transliteration for Arabic words, after which only Arabic writing is used.

The text resembles the *al-Kitaab* series, currently the most commonly used Standard Arabic text series in the U.S. and abroad. Few, if any, learners will be studying only Moroccan colloquial without some background in Standard Arabic. As the author explains, *IMAC* is intended for those concurrently studying Standard Arabic, or who have completed a year of Standard Arabic, and, as such, could easily supplement the *al-Kitaab* series. It is not, however, a complete mirror of the *al-Kitaab* format, nor designed as a direct supplement to that text. While this offers the greatest flexibility for the teacher, it will also require some decisions from a course director about how and when to integrate *IMAC* into a Standard Arabic curriculum, since most students using the text will also be learning Standard Arabic from a different text. *IMAC*, for example, offers an introduction to the Arabic alphabet and sound system before the first chapter, but this introduction is not as extensive as that presented in most Standard Arabic texts. The teacher will be left to decide whether or how to integrate this section into their general introduction to the Arabic alphabet. Similarly, the book offers numerous detailed explanations of grammatical points, many of which are common to Standard Arabic. Since the explanation of causative verbs, to take one example, appears at different points in both *IMAC* and most Standard Arabic texts, the teacher must decide which explanation(s) to use and when. A possible point of confusion is the fact that the text does not distinguish strictly colloquial terms from those also found in Standard Arabic. Thus, students may be uncertain whether a word in *IMAC* is suitable for Standard Arabic, or only Moroccan colloquial.

Nonetheless, thanks to all its strengths, the text could serve well as the core of a Moroccan colloquial course. The entire book is intended for 120 contact hours, which is more than sufficient for even the most intensive Moroccan colloquial study abroad programs. The text could easily be used before, during, or after a study abroad experience in Morocco. As should be obvious by now, this package is intended for those wanting to achieve functional proficiency in the dialect, and is definitely not a "phrase book" or conversational guide for travelers. Nor would it be suited for those looking primarily for a cultural guide with merely some language thrown in. For those serious about learning spoken Moroccan Arabic, however, it would be difficult to recommend any other text.

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**Frangieh, Bassam. *Arabic for Life*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2012. Includes a DVD. ISBN: 9780300141313.**

Bassam Frangieh's *Arabic for Life* is a comprehensive Modern Standard Arabic textbook for beginners. It is a welcome addition to the few Arabic textbooks designed for speakers of English learning Arabic. The book is well organized throughout, thereby making it easy to use.

The book consists of two major sections. Section One is an introduction to Arabic sounds and letters. The first unit in this section introduces the first three consonants in Arabic: *Baa, Taa,* and *Thaa*, along with the three long vowels *Alif, Waw,* and *Yaa,* as well as their three short counterparts *FatHa, Kasra*, and *Damma*. The concept of adjoining two consonants using the *sukoon* marker is introduced in this first unit, too. Introducing all vowels, short and long, from the beginning is a welcome pedagogical move, giving teachers the necessary tools to string letters and make new words. Unit Two in Section One introduces the remaining four non-connector letters, namely *Dal, Thal, Raa,* and *Zayn*. Introducing the grammatical marker *Nunation* at the end of the section on indefinite nouns, in the same unit as the consonant *Noon* itself, is another welcome move. This grouping together of similar sounds, one a grammatical marker, the other a consonant, enables students to contrast both sounds and to separate their functions. All twenty-eighty letters in Arabic are covered by the end of Unit Six. Unit Seven introduces the *Shadda*, the *Hamza*, and the *Madda*. Given the complex spelling rules for the *Hamza*, the author deliberately avoids stating these complex spelling rules. Instead, the book shows many examples of *Hamza* in different positions within a word. Although this represents a welcome pedagogical step, new teachers may find it frustrating that no guidance is provided. A footnote on the rules of spelling the *Hamza* could make a big difference. Unit Eight is completely dedicated to the definite article الـ , which poses challenges to learners, not in terms of its meaning but in terms of its phonological assimilation when it is followed by certain consonants. Unit Nine exposes learners to the effect of changing script style in both typing and handwriting. Although the handwritten personal letters are written by famous Arab writers and intellectuals, they are of little pedagogical value at this stage because their language is way above the level of students. In general, Section One accomplishes the task of teaching Arabic letters and sounds succinctly in a simple and pedagogically sound manner without deviating too much into content teaching.

Section Two consists of twenty-one units progressing from personal themes to more general ones. Each unit includes a vocabulary list, a list of expressions, two readings, and sections on grammar, speaking, and culture. An audio recording of all texts is available on the accompanying DVD. The topics covered in this section do not follow a logical functional transition. For example, the first five units deal with self, study, and work. However, the next four units feature famous Arab personalities with no thematic connection between them other than the fact that they are all famous people. Unit Ten reverts back to the university theme, but Unit Eleven goes back again to feature famous personalities. Units Twelve, Thirteen, Fourteen and Fifteen, feature texts about four Arab countries; however, within each unit one of texts deals with a personality from that country. Unit Seventeen introduces important social issues, such as family ties and polygamy in Arab societies; however, the next unit reverts back to feature texts about the country of Jordan. Unit Nineteen presents

two excerpts from literary texts written by Arab women, and Unit Twenty does the same for male writers. The last unit is dedicated to literary excerpts from different ages and includes a total of 20 prose and poetry texts.

Although the book presents good and interesting texts for reading assignments, it lacks pedagogical consistency. After the first five units, Section Two looks like an amalgam of interesting readings with little pedagogical design. The fact that this book is meant for beginners makes it very difficult for learners to accommodate this abrupt thematic variation and complexity. The topics in the culture section at the end of each unit are not directly related to the daily lives of Arabs. For example, the section on love poems offers little explanation of their meanings or context. Although poetry, songs, and the Qur'an are important cultural artifacts of Arabic, they are introduced too early and too abstractly to be of much pedagogical value.

The most obvious shortcoming of this text is the lack of activities. For example, there are no activities to scaffold the learning of vocabulary. Grammar activities seem be isolated and not contextualized and there are no activities on the readings. The only commonly occurring activity is translation from Arabic to English and vice versa. Furthermore, with great emphasis in the field on proficiency-based instruction, the speaking section in each unit is too simplistic. For example, in Unit Four, students only learn expressions of state of being (to be happy, tired, hungry, etc.), and are prompted to simply repeat phrases they hear on the DVD and then to repeat the dialogue with a classmate. The book does not offer opportunities or situations for students to "communicate," using newly learned vocabulary and grammar.

Grammar is presented and explained very well. The presentation of concepts seems to proceed naturally without complication or breaking down. The book tackles the past tense conjugation before the imperfect tense, which is not the norm in other Arabic textbooks. Although past tense conjugation might seem easier with suffixes only, one might argue that the functionally imperfect tense is more important to learners. All three cases on the noun are introduced early on in Unit Three, but there is no recycling of case in the following chapters. The three moods of the imperfect are introduced in one place instead of distributing them evenly over three or four units.

This text is accompanied by a DVD on which all the vocabulary and reading texts are recorded. The recordings are mere audio representations of the written texts, so they do not offer extra listening material to work with. There are simply no activities or tasks based on those videos.

*Arabic for Life* attempts to achieve many things at once. It is successful in the first section by keeping the focus on pedagogical issues of teaching Arabic sounds and letters. However, in Section Two, which is supposed to develop proficiency, it does not provide a streamlined story or set of themes, nor does it provide enough activities, drills and tasks to engage learners. Having said that, I think the readings in Section Two could complement any other textbook in a beginning and, maybe even, intermediate Arabic language course.

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## Biography

**Jennings, Jerry L. as told by Ida Hoffman Firestone.** *Darkness Hides the Flowers: A True Story of Holocaust Survival.* **Wayne, PA: Beach Lloyd Publishers, LLC., 2011. Pp. 114. 10 B&W and 6 color illustrations, timeline. Softcover 8 ½" X 11". $19.95. ISBN: 978-0-9819417-8-3. For orders and further information, contact: Joanne S. Silver, Mgr., Beach Lloyd Publishers, LLC., 40 Cabot Dr., Wayne, PA 19087-5619. Tel: (610) 407-9107 or cell (215) 407-4570; fax: (775) 254-0633; E-mail: beachlloyd@erols.com. Web site: www. beachlloyd.com.**

*Darkness Hides the Flowers: A True Story of Holocaust Survival* by Jerry L. Jennings is the story of Ida Hoffman Firestone, a fifteen-year-old girl, separated from her family and struggling to survive on her own as a Jew in Occupied France. The beauty of her story lies in the fact that it was her poetry that helped to give her the strength and courage to survive. Later in life, it was her painting that helped her to recapture and deal with the traumatic memories from this horrible period.

*Darkness Hides the Flowers* is made up of eleven chapters that trace Ida's story from the time a scar-faced man attempted to arrest her father, until her death in Philadelphia, where she married, became a piano teacher, and discovered her talent for painting. Her father, Adolphe Hoffman, was eventually arrested not because he was a Jew but because he had been labeled as a Communist. After the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 dramatically changed the world as Russians knew it and Communism was established, her parents fled Russia in 1920. They arrived in Germany via Estonia. There, German immigration authorities changed their family name from "Goffmann" to "Hoffmann," thereby establishing their family name as a German one and not a Jewish one and, as a result, saving Adolphe's life while he was a political inmate at Drancy, the internment camp on the northeastern outskirts of Paris.

By far the most horrific memory described by Ida is the one of Madame Delion or "The Lion Lady." Mme Delion came to the farm where Ida was hiding with her mother, Berthe Blanc, and her sister, Eugénie (her younger brother, Arnold, was taken in by M. and Mme Herlin, two Christian friends of Adolphe, and her older sister Rosa was able to survive as an office clerk in Nancy) and took Ida away. In short, Mme Delion was looking for a slave to do household chores. Ida was not fed, nor was any member of the family, other than Mme Delion, to talk to her. Worst of all, Mme Delion would beat Ida on a daily basis and for the entire time that Ida was with Mme Delion. There were only two days when she was not beaten—days when Mme Delion was impressed with Ida's sewing abilities. Ida could not even eat scraps of food after she cleared the dinner table, nor could she try to salvage food from the garbage bin for fear of being beaten by Mme Delion. Her only access to food was to buy raw vegetables with the small amount of money her mother had been able to give her. When the Delion family went on vacation for two weeks, Ida survived on her own in the forests of northeastern France. When Ida was finally able to escape the Delion family, she was a walking skeleton with a swollen belly. It was during this time period that the extremely sensitive Ida wrote her poems.

After the Liberation of France and despite the fact that her entire family had survived, Ida became depressed and withdrawn. Only by forcing herself to play

her beloved piano did she regain a sense of normalcy. Through hard work and determination, Ida graduated from the Conservatory in Nancy, in June 1948.

Late in 1948, Ida and her family immigrated to the United States. She married Harman Firestone in 1951 and worked as an office clerk until the birth of her son Craig in 1953. In 1957, after a neighbor heard her playing the piano, Ida began to give private lessons. In 1980, she joined a group of Holocaust survivors who assisted her with speaking with students. But it was the rediscovery of her poems that made her whole again:

> When I was hiding from the Nazis, I held onto hope by writing poems. I had never written poems before and, after liberation, I never wrote poems again. Still, during those dreadful nine months, my poems were as crucial to my survival as food itself. They surrounded me with spiritual protection even as the hidden pins that held them were pricking my flesh. I had written about forty poems in all, pouring my fears and feelings into them. But after we came to America, I was heart-broken to discover that my precious poems had been lost! I felt like I had lost a part of myself. But what could I do? They were gone forever. … Then, about three years ago, I was preparing a recital for my piano students. … I had to go hunting for my old sheet music to find the piece. And there, pressed safely inside the Bach music, were all of my original poems, written on the scraps of paper I had pinned inside my clothes in 1944. Sixty years later, I was whole again. (93)

Ida's poems appear in both French and English, alongside her artwork, and could be used at a variety of levels of French instruction, as well as in interdisciplinary Humanities courses. Teachers wanting to use Ida's poems and paintings will need to carefully select appropriate sections since some are more mature in nature than others. As Jennings explains: "As I listened to Ida, I often gazed at these paintings. There was such beauty and serenity in these paintings, yet they represented terror, anxiety and loneliness. The contrast is characteristic of Ida: a sweet, very likeable person who lacks close friends; a humble, soft-spoken woman with the iron will of a Napoleon. It is a contrast that was forged in 1944, when a simple Jewish girl had to somehow maintain an outward image of normalcy and calm, while she was being consumed by fear and the pangs of hunger. I came to see Ida's paintings as the outside image of hope, and her poems as the inside turmoil of reality. Her paintings depicted how life should be, while her childhood poems cried of how life should never be" (97).

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**Publisher's Response**

Thank you for this review, which does justice to a remarkable woman, and encourages teachers to use her poems and paintings to teach French and/or Social Studies in the

context of a true and most powerful story of survival. The book provides a unique way for students to access history through first-person testimony.

Joanne S. Silver, Manager
Beach Lloyd Publishers, LLC

## Chinese

**Ning, Cynthia Y. and John S. Montanaro. Encounters: Chinese Language and Culture** 汉语和中国文化**. Book 1. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2012. Annotated Instructor's Edition ISBN: 978-0-300-16166-3; Character Writing Workbook ISBN: 978-0-300-16170-0.**

*Encounters: Chinese Language and Culture* 汉语和中国文化   is an audio-visual Chinese language textbook series jointly produced by Yale University Press and China International Press Group (CIPG). Student Book 1 contains ten 30-minute episodes, includes an introductory unit, and the first ten units, each of which includes a 20-minute scenario and a ten-minute introduction about Chinese culture. Originally conceived as a Chinese language-learning project with an educational TV series, Yale University Press and CIPG began filming the audio-visual unit episodes of *Encounters* on the campus of the Communication University of China in 2009. It is described as a "fully integrated multimedia program for beginning-level Chinese that immerses students in the sounds of Mandarin Chinese while simultaneously exposing them to the sights and culture of China."(**http://yalepress.yale.edu**) The script follows an intricate story line acted out by a crew of Chinese and American teachers and students.

Similar to other popular Chinese language teaching materials on the market today (such as *Integrated Chinese* [IC]), *Encounters* unit themes focus on personal experiences, numbers, leave-taking, self-introductions, making an appointment, nationality, family and friends, school, professions and careers, personal needs, daily routines, shopping and bargaining, and getting around town to shop and do errands. Different from the IC approach, the authors of *Encounters* advocate a more direct method, encouraging students to watch the online video episodes before studying vocabulary. To begin with, students are encouraged to focus on pronunciation and to guess the meaning of a conversation by using only context cues. Relevant background information is then added to scaffold the learning process with new words introduced gradually, along the way, from watching and listening to the video, doing different hands-on exercises, individual worksheets, pair work, and "mingling" or small group work. Video segments are numerically labeled as Encounter 1, 2, 3, etc., and are viewed repeatedly across the whole unit. Using Unit 1, Encounter 3 (Asking for and giving phone numbers) as an example: there are four activities that require students to watch the video segment, followed by filling in the blanks (1.35); cloze exercise (1.36); matching (1.37); and mingling (1.38). Pictures from the video segments, cartoon clip art images, and authentic pictures with Chinese words are often provided to facilitate comprehension. Relevant information is included in the "Grammar Bits 语法点滴" section. Expanded vocabularies are often provided in "FYI 供你参考" sections. A list of vocabulary list is placed in the Recap section at the end of each unit.

In order to glean learners' opinions of *Encounters*, I recruited three top students in my Chinese 202 Intermediate Chinese class to help with this review. I examined the annotated Instructor's Edition 1, while they studied the Student Book 1 and Character Writing Workbook 1, including audio-visual contents available online at **http://www. encounterschinese.com**.

My first impression of *Encounters* is favorable. It is a fine Chinese language text, which requires good planning and a considerable effort to produce. Its online episode segments, especially the layout of unit content sequential and plot intriguing, are well done. I like the fact that the authors have taken the time to develop rich characters with varied backgrounds and a central story that evolves along several fronts. As I read through the units, I realized that I was becoming somewhat emotionally involved (rather like watching a TV soap-opera), and I wanted to find out what happened next.

The general feedback from the three student reviewers has been more critical than mine. They all agree that the quality of video production, music, and scenery are outstanding. They like the cultural video segments and the engaging story line. The course content is generally interesting. The Website is well organized and easy to navigate. The videos are of very high quality and visually appealing. The lessons are logically arranged around everyday activities, making them easy for students to relate to. Overall, their study experience has been positive, although not without some frustration.

We all agree that *Encounters* contains the following areas for improvement:

**Too much material to cover**

*Encounters* contains a lot of information that may frustrate beginning students. Its complex instructional process may require more than one semester just to finish 5 units. Two semesters might not be enough to cover all units. For a college student who does not have a lot of time to study, the format of *Encounters* can be frustrating and time-consuming. For example, Unit 2, Encounter 2.5 requires students to watch a video, and 2.6 asks a question pertaining to it. The video is 14 minutes long, with lots of unintelligible fast speech. The answer to the question comes 10 minutes and 21 seconds into the video. It requires students to watch a 10-minute video to learn one short phrase.

**Presentation of vocabulary**

Throughout the review process, I had a nagging concern about how an absolute beginner can comprehend online conversation episodes in *Encounters* without first studying the vocabulary used. We firmly believe in the importance of studying vocabulary prior to watching the video segments. Moreover, *pinyin* should be readily available so that beginners can easily see a word and learn how to correctly pronounce it. It is also recommended that it would be better if the words used in encounter dialogues were emphasized. It does not build confidence to continuously throw segments continuously at the students as long as they have difficulty understanding. *Encounters* places new words in the Recap section at the end of each unit. Sometimes looking for the meaning of a new Chinese word can be a frustrating experience. New vocabulary words should be placed where they are most visible, with Chinese characters, *pinyin,* and an English-language translation appearing side-by-side.

There is also a common concern whether placing both the traditional and simplified Chinese characters right next to each other is beneficial. Furthermore, the structure of the text does not appear to be cohesive, because the inconsistent layout mixes simplified and traditional characters with *pinyin*. In fact, the presentation appears quite random within the text. It is only in the introductory unit that both written formats are listed together with *pinyin*. The confusion starts to appear in later units when *pinyin* is removed.

### Audio quality and the high speed of speech

The audio part of *Encounters* needs further improvement in standardizing speed of speech. Although many teachers believe that it is important to understand the fast "speaking speed of native speakers," in *Encounters* audios, in many cases, the speech is much too fast for beginners. Sometimes the audio quality is less than satisfactory, which makes it difficult for listeners to follow along. Although the authors want students to be directly immersed in conversation without studying new words first, my student reviewers are all concerned about understanding the audio dialogue. The conversation is very difficult for them to comprehend, in spite of their intermediate Chinese proficiency. They all feel that the program would be much more user-friendly, if the meaning of words appeared on the same page the first time they are used. Also, some dialogues are difficult to understand because they are unrelated to unit content. Finally, the speed and timing of audio exercises (for example: 6.12) is inconsistent and, at times, seems too rushed.

### Unit Rap songs

All three student reviewers are unhappy about the rap songs. They feel that rap is "very annoying" and wonder about the value of studying rap. Rap songs are not something they want to learn or remember. The idea is that trying to sing along would help students get used to pronouncing Chinese sounds, but so would just reading the text. To students, the songs are just "a bunch of non-related words repeated over and over." Perhaps rap would appeal more to a younger audience. It would be much better for students to hear words over and over in context than simply repeated by themselves, and with other words that do not share a contextual meaning.

### Online access is sometimes difficult

To use *Encounters*, a reliable Internet service is a must, both for classroom use and at home. This can post a big problem, however. The images can be choppy and slow, and sometimes the computer takes forever to download an image. Also, there have been times when one wants to pause the video to check on something else; however, when the video is paused, a grey page for link sharing comes up, obscuring the paused video. One cannot really share the video with anyone who is not registered on the site. So, this feature is rather pointless since it hides the video.

### Comments about the Character Writing Workbook 1

The unit notes about Chinese character history and derivation from pictographs are very interesting. However, this book contains too much information. As an introductory text on how to develop character writing literacy, *Encounters* does not live up to our expectations. One reviewer finds this workbook confusing. For example,

in unit 2 on page 40, there are only simplified and traditional characters and an English translation, but no *pinyin*. For example, the word "*sui* 岁" is used but was never taught beforehand. The index for the book says that it can be found on page 71, but this is not so. It is actually listed on page 57. With modern technology, this type of error is hard to accept.

**Other concerns**

We experienced frequent confusion while examining *Encounters*. For example, in exercise 6.17 the directions are a bit confusing because they say "follow the examples." It is not clear what examples the authors have in mind because there is nothing on this page or on any other page in this unit that is labeled "example." Sometimes the authors use the symbol "XX" in a matching exercise, which is offsetting. For example, in 3.44, a date or time or a "fill in the blank" answer would be more appropriate instead of this odd "XX." Also, some exercises are good but not ideally presented. For example: video 2.27 could be a good exercise, if only a few more seconds were built in between questions to allow time for writing.

In summary, the reviewers question the organization and teaching philosophy of *Encounters*. Several units contain many questions on words and phrases that have not yet been taught. Questions such as, "Can you guess?" often leave students in a state of clueless frustration. Unless the vocabulary (which appears at the end of each lesson) is reviewed first, many of the questions resemble a guessing game or puzzle. Inconsistent use, random intermixing, and teaching of traditional/ simplified formats, *pinyin*, and English words often lead to confusion. Sometimes "overkill"—utilizing too much content to teach a very minor point of grammar or single word—can be a waste of time. For example, there is a 10-minute video with lots of unrelated, unintelligible dialog, just to learn the phrase "how old are you?" Vocabulary words are taught unconventionally, which can be an ineffective way for some students to learn. Other more standard texts (such as IC) appear more effective because they usually present vocabulary in Chinese characters and *pinyin*, then use that vocabulary in a dialog/monologue. That dialog usually uses a word or two from the vocabulary list in each sentence, and the audio is available in traditional formats (CD, MP3), making it easily accessible outside class.

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**Publisher's Response**

Thank you to *The NECTFL Review* and Mei-Jean Kuo Barth for the thoughtful assessment of *Encounters: Chinese Language and Culture*. While we are of course grateful for the positive comments about the quality of the episodic dramatic series and the cultural documentary that *Encounters* offers, we feel that many of the criticisms of both the reviewer and her students result from their predisposition to and comfort level with a pedagogical approach that is fundamentally different than that of *Encounters*.

Professor Barth and the three second-year students who offered comments on *Encounters* are obviously very familiar with and fond of *Integrated Chinese*, and

understandably so. *Integrated Chinese* has been a bulwark for a generation of language learners. *Encounters* is designed to embody a twenty-first century learning approach—learning in the information age—as currently and widely discussed in academic circles. It emphasizes that learners need to develop the wherewithal to search for necessary information using the new technologies, assess their worth and applicability, organize information in a coherent, usable format, and utilize it to meet their specific needs. The role of educators is not to teach students in the traditional style, but to facilitate student learning, and to help students develop capacities such as critical thinking, creativity, flexibility and adaptability, initiative, and communicative skills.

To support a twenty-first century learning style, *Encounters'* instructional materials move away from the familiar approach of presenting tightly controlled chunks of material to students in a structured layout for them to absorb as best they can. Rather, the program provides learners a friendlier version of the Internet itself, and encourages students to be proactive about their learning, to reach out and, with assistance, find what is suitable to their particular learning style and communicative need; and, finally, use what they are learning to comprehend and convey meaning in increasingly more complex situations as they progress through the curriculum.

Thus, it is no surprise that *Encounters* does not do things the way *Integrated Chinese* does because the differences were completely intentional. *Encounters* was not developed to provide a re-packaged version of *Integrated Chinese* or any other existing textbook with the addition of enhanced new media. Instead, it was created to offer something quite different, and our test audiences of students who have learned Chinese using *Encounters* for a semester or more have responded with enthusiasm and have confidently acquired Chinese language skills.

Given these differences, what was identified as "areas for improvement" in the review actually represent many of *Encounters'* key points of differentiation as a curriculum:

**Too much material to cover**

*Encounters'* goal is to make information available to students and simulate an immersion experience; different students will pick up on and utilize different bits based on their individual needs and learning styles. The focus is shifted from the teacher to the learners: it's not what the teachers cover that matters, but the subset that the students absorb and internalize to use in communication. The dramatic episodes and cultural documentary provide enriched authentic input. Students may watch these individually outside of the classroom or, if the teacher prefers, together in the classroom. Ideally, students should learn Chinese in an immersive experience in China; but, in lieu of being there, the video brings Chinese culture to life within the student's own environment. They see Chinese being spoken at natural speed, in natural settings, and come to the classroom with an "acculturated attitude," with the idea firmly in mind of their target destination within the target culture, so that the bits and pieces of language they pick up in class click into place and become available for use and application. The fifteen-minute episodes and cultural documentaries are not intended to teach short phrases, as the reviewer suggests: they motivate students to learn and provide the cultural context for the learning. Short video callouts within each lesson provide the input to encourage students to learn vocabulary, short phrases, and

key sentences. These callouts vary between several seconds to 2-3 minutes long, but students are never expected to come to control all of the information in them (hence this is not "too much material to cover"). The callouts train the students' ears to listen below the natural flow of language, as they would eventually have to do in China, and to seek out the bits that they need to and can use. *Encounters* encourages students to develop this ability and tolerate what they cannot understand while grabbing hold of critical bits of language in the flow, and then to think critically about what is important and what is not; be creative in interpreting meaning (taking into account authentic, non-verbal clues); be flexible, agile, and take initiative to press for further information as best they can; and focus on communication.

### Presentation of vocabulary

The reviewer objects to how *Encounters* presents vocabulary: specifically, that new words are NOT provided up front, with characters, *pinyin*, and English in tables early in the Units. Again, the approach is intentional. Research indicates that the best way to learn and retain vocabulary is not from lists, but by problem solving. *Encounters* provides what are in essence a series of graded puzzles leading up to communicative tasks. By the time students complete the puzzles, they are almost ready to carry out the tasks. The process of task completion multiple times in the classroom (i.e., mingling exercises) solidifies communicative skills in an interactive context. Those who don't understand the point of crossword or Sudoku puzzles, for example, might complain in frustration, "Why don't you just TELL us what the answers are? Why are you making us WORK to get the answers?" But the point is, the answers were always there (as they are in *Encounters,* at the back of every unit); the most valuable part of the journey is the workout, because this helps with the learning process.

Similarly, the presentation of simplified and traditional characters in the *Encounters* text can be surprising to instructors. Educational materials for literacy training in the book are written with both formats of characters; authentic texts are either in traditional (if they derive from Taiwan, or Hong Kong, or Chinese communities overseas) or simplified (if they derive from the PRC or Singapore). This simulates real life: in many environments (especially overseas, in the US, Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Canada etc.) Chinese characters come in both formats. Even within Taiwan, readers encounter simplified characters (particularly in handwriting) and, in the PRC, readers encounter traditional characters (in decorative texts on signs, or in karaoke subtitles!). *Encounters* encourages students to be lithe and adaptable, and equip themselves for what they will confront in the real world. Since there is a great deal of scaffolding in the textbook, students tend not to be overwhelmed, although teachers accustomed to other approaches might fear that they will be. If teachers don't give up control, it is more difficult for students to take control. *Encounters* wants students to assume control of their own learning from the beginning.

### Audio quality and high speed of speech

The video provided in *Encounters* simulates an authentic environment. Natural speech is a counterbalance to "teacher speech." Teachers will very reasonably enunciate clearly and speak slowly, and they will do so even when they are using *Encounters* as the classroom textbook, but it is also valuable to regularly expose students to natural

speech as well. Most of the reviewer's complaint seems to have to do with the speed of speech, but if there truly is a problem in places with audio quality, of course we will work to fix the files. The advantage of having media delivered online is that problems are relatively easy to fix.

## Unit rap songs

We were very surprised to learn that the raps were not well received by the reviewer's three second-year students. Audiences of teachers and students we've shared them with and current users of *Encounters* have generally found them delightful. Students have asked about how to download them to their mp3 players and often enjoy writing and performing their own songs. The raps are a review device to use as instructors choose; they come at the end of the unit and do not interfere with the rest of the unit. Memorization is a big part of Chinese educational culture, and the raps are our nod toward that culture: they make the content of the lesson easier to retain. Chinese *kuaiban* 快板 storytelling has been called "Chinese rapping," so there is also some cultural precedence for using them.

## Online access is sometimes difficult

The authors and publisher sympathize with the users on this issue. Where the Internet connection is strong, the full range of online materials works beautifully; you can start and stop and replay at will, and the sound and image are perfectly in sync. The basic idea is that the Internet/computer is infinitely patient: a student at home who needs more repetition can play the materials as many times as she or he wishes, as can the instructor in the classroom. Where the connection is unreliable, streaming the online materials becomes more challenging. *Encounters* therefore provides a second option; all the media is on two DVD course packs available for separate purchase.

## Comments about the Character Writing Workbook 1

Typographical errors in the workbook are unfortunate, and will certainly be corrected in the second printing. As for the critique that the workbook provides too much information, again, the reasoning is that students are not meant to be accountable for everything that is available in the book; they may absorb what is useful to them, and leave the rest. Finally, when the reviewer says, "As an introductory text on how to develop character writing literacy, *Encounters* does not live up to our expectations," perhaps we'll have to acquiesce on this point; character writing literacy is not a top priority in *Encounters*. There are many book and online materials on the market that focus on character writing, and the *Encounters* website will include a list of some of the more popular and effective programs. But for a profession that is debating the advisability of teaching students to handwrite Chinese characters at all, when native speakers now type more than they handwrite, and new technological tools can produce characters with a few clicks on a keyboard, *Encounters* puts greater focus on developing communicative ability in listening and speaking first, reading second, and writing last. Of course, students who enjoy writing can be encouraged to turn in writing examples every day; the workbook and other online resources provide plenty of support for that.

## Other concerns

The reviewer writes, "We experienced frequent confusion while examining *Encounters*" and cites some examples. We are sorry for this, and suspect that this is

because many teachers are unfamiliar with the approach. Yale University Press is investing in teacher training seminars, both virtually and face-to-face, and has created a Forum area in the Instructor section of **EncountersChinese.com** for discussions that may be helpful.

In summary, we agree with the reviewer that *Encounters* is "unconventional" in many ways. Our position, though, is that the approach is *more* effective, in the short run, but particularly in the long run, to language learners. We look forward to communicating with teachers who would like to learn more about *Encounters,* and thank both NECTFL and Professor Barth for this review.

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## French

**Hubbell, Amy L.** *À la recherche d'un emploi: Business French in a Communicative Context*. **Newburyport, MA: Focus Publishing, 2011. Includes Instructor's Resource Manual. ISBN 13: 978-1-58510-372-0; ISBN 10: 1-58510-372-1. Manual: ISBN 13: 978-1-58510-411-6; ISBN 10: 1-58510-411-6. $59.95 for text.**

Designed for the non-Business French major, Amy L. Hubbell's À la *recherche d'un emploi: Business French in a Communicative Context* has many strengths and truly fills a need in the business French textbook market today. In particular, the text presents a multinational Francophone perspective, using fresh material from Quebec and other French-speaking regions, as well as video clips (many available from You Tube), up-to-date websites, legal, and geographical terms. The model letters and marketing unit of the two final chapters are especially strong. The communicative-based activities are designed for a discussion-based third-year level French course at the college level. That said, Hubbell's focus is perhaps too narrow for many business French courses, especially those designed to help students pass the *Diplôme de français professionnel* exams of the *Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie de Paris* (CCIP).

The first two chapters offer a brief overview of the geography, economy, and administration in France, Quebec and several other Francophone countries. These chapters present up-to-date information on the Francophone regions, for instance, the ROM, DOM, COM and POM designations, unemployment statistics, as well as a brief overview of the member states of the European Union. The two principal activities (*fiche d'identité* and presentation of various Francophone countries) provide useful information for any student of contemporary France and the Francophone world. Indeed, most of the information from the first chapter could be built into earlier courses, thus giving the instructor more opportunity to cover broader business content in their business French course. The second chapter begins with a plethora of statistics, such as the gross domestic product, gross national product, minimum wage, and annual revenues for France. Given that Hubbell's ideal reader is a non-business and non-economics-trained French major, these statistics might be more appropriate to an appendix. Some professors will appreciate the statistics because they

show the complexities of the business world and the economy of the regions covered. In addition, the chapter's activities are not interactive enough, nor distinctly different from those suggested in the first chapter, and thus prove to be somewhat redundant and unappealing to students. Nonetheless, the structures and legal designations of French businesses (e.g., PME, TPE, SA, SARL and SAS) are essential to any business French course. The lists of the largest corporations in France and in Quebec are useful to the future job seeker as well. Many business French teachers will find it necessary to pick and choose from these introductory chapters and invent more compelling activities to help their students learn these concepts.

Chapters 3-6 provide the focus of Hubbell's suggested business French course, that is, the successful job search. She furnishes vocabulary lists, communicative activities, and recommendations for determining a professional profile and establishing an ideal job application dossier. The context is primarily that of Quebec, in part because of Hubbell's heavy reliance on superb materials from a 3-day workshop she attended at Université Laval, the *MC2 Expérience Stratégique*. The materials and activities are useful for anyone trying to get a job, and indeed, the author points to her successful appointment to the University of Queensland as evidence. These chapters are exceptionally thorough in their re-framing of how to present oneself to a potential employer. Detailed exercises help a student describe personal and professional abilities, "decode" a job ad, find job listings on the Internet, write the ideal CV and cover letter, contact potential employers, ask for interviews, and prepare for difficult job interview questions. Any university student would benefit from the wise advice culled from the *MC2 Expérience Stratégique au Québec*. As a stand-alone Business French text, however, this reviewer has several reservations.

Many of the activities are excellent, although some could be improved. For instance, the activities designed to develop the student applicant profile (*capacités*, *savoir-faire*, *qualités*, *compétences générales* [70-73]), are excellent, reminding this reviewer of those in the textbook *Entretiens*. As in this latter text, I would suggest beginning with the general term, *compétences générales*, before moving on to the more specialized vocabulary and, for the sake of clarity, providing many more examples in each list. For instance, Hubbell gives only three examples of *savoir-faire*. This section would provide an excellent opportunity to develop vocabulary in context (an aspect that is somewhat lacking for some of the vocabulary lists that begin each chapter). The grids and exercises should be reordered or reorganized in certain cases. For instance, on page 73, the *aspects à améliorer* more logically precede the *forces* or strengths and, arguably, would correspond to the exercise of reflecting upon one's own weaknesses and then translating them into strengths. The author suggests as much herself in the instructor's manual and, indeed, there are several instances where she suggests changes to activities, all of which make a great deal of sense. Other exercises in these middle chapters are extremely useful. For instance, the grid designed to build the *bilan personnel et professionnel* with the columns *je suis, je sais, et je sais faire* really helps the student to conceptualize their strengths for their job resume. The networking exercises (which contain typographical errors) seem much too detailed and numerous, however— at least for the students I teach. My students would benefit from a simple and brief description of how to consider how everyone has a potential network of support for a

job search. At this point in the text, Dr. Hubbell's suggested syllabi place the student halfway through the course, but they have yet to compare CVs from different countries and attempt to write their own, let alone consider the interview process. While the idea of establishing a dossier is excellent and leaves the student with a concrete toolkit, these chapters go into more detail than a semester-length course merits. Activities could and should be combined, streamlined, and re-ordered to maximize student learning.

Of more concern is the lack of business content or, rather, the balance of job application materials in relation to content that would be useful once the student is working. For instance, the résumés include very useful information having to do with sales and management, and up-to-date multimedia content; however, the text does not teach these concepts, nor does it sufficiently place the vocabulary in context or give the students opportunities to learn these valuable areas of business. One wonders why the vocabulary lists that begin each chapter contain words such as *cravate* (tie), but not *raison sociale* or *personnalité morale* (228). Why does Hubbell list the *formules classiques* in parallel presentation with the *formules simplifiées* that she proposes? These latter expressions are simply not appropriate for most business letters (196). Given that the hypothetical instructor lacks specialized business French training, the late presentation of the formulaic aspects of letter writing (without the indication of addressees being parallel in the opening and the closing of a letter) might cause problems for some instructors. That said, the pacing and content of the final two chapters are excellent, and provide outstanding material for any business course. Chapter 7 quickly summarizes the essential skill of writing the all-important letter (a major aspect of any French-speaking job), e-mails, and how to fill out an order form.

The final chapter, written primarily by Lucy Baluteig-Gomes, is especially valuable. Few, if any, business language texts contain such a succinct and timely description of the founding vision and mission of a company (which is essential to understanding and formulating a successful marketing strategy), as well as its positioning, appropriate market studies, and the process of setting up a small international business. In relatively few, but exceptionally lively, pages, the student learns the multitude of aspects of starting up and running a successful company. This last chapter provides a superb ready-to-use marketing unit that will prove useful in any business French course.

In short, *À la recherche d'un emploi: Business French in a Communicative Context* provides a practical, up-to-date wealth of information and activities that help students apply for a job in a French-speaking country or region, and includes superb material essential to any Business French course.

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**Publisher's Response**

The reviewer notes many things that can be improved in Amy Hubbel's text. By and large, I agree with professor Meyer's suggestions. Her insightful and intelligent observations are invaluable to us at Focus Publishing as we continue to develop new

products to suit the needs of an ever-changing market. Still, we feel that Hubbell's text fills a need in today's market and includes many useful features.

Ron Pullins, Publisher
Focus Publishing
Newburyport, MA

**Lebovitz, David.** *The Sweet Life in Paris. Delicious Adventures in the World's Most Glorious and Perplexing City*. **New York: Broadway Books, 2010. ISBN: 978-0-7679-2889-2. $14.**

 Stories about life in "sweet France" (*la douce France*) that titillate the imagination and appeal to the senses have never been in short supply. Since at least the time of *The Song of Roland* (ca. 1150), an epic poem which might have been written by an "Englishman" for all we know, writers (many of them French, admittedly) have regaled readers everywhere with more or less credible accounts of the good life in that wondrous land called France, the country many love to hate, but that most people admire for its quality of life. In France, as the German adage goes, one can live *heureux comme Dieu en France*.[1] Thomas Jefferson could not have agreed more, stating emphatically: "Every man has two countries: his own and France."

 One day, David Lebovitz, the author of five highly acclaimed dessert books, dropped his pots and pans in faraway San Francisco, crammed all his worldly belongings into three suitcases, and set off for "gay Paree" to start a new life. Once there, after settling in the "*bobo*" (short for *bourgeois bohème* or Yuppie Bohemian) Bastille neighborhood, Lebovitz embarks upon a voyage of discovery, intent on uncovering the arcane secrets of world-renowned French specialties (most of them desserts, by the way), including, among other delicacies, *clafoutis*, chocolate cake, *mousse au chocolat*, hot chocolate, chocolate macaroons, (our author clearly is addicted to chocolate!), and *madeleines*. Along the way, naturally, he confirms the time-honored association between happiness and the stomach, as well as just about every known stereotype about the French way of life. Although much of what he relates is a bit trite, many of his cultural insights are keen and sometimes quite amusing. Readers are treated to a cornucopia of mouth-watering recipes that will test any New Year's resolution to eat healthy and to exercise. The French don't seem to pay attention to what they eat, do they, and they still have the third-highest life expectancy in the world. Why listen to what the doctors say?

 The book's catchy subtitle ("Delicious Adventures in the World's Most Glorious and Perplexing City") suggests that adapting to Parisian mores implies a steep learning curb for anyone unfortunate enough to be born *extra muros*, even for someone as familiar with French cuisine as Lebovitz. That is precisely why the book is of interest to teachers of French. I can see assigning a chapter here or there as outside reading in a language or civilization class. Students stand to learn a lot about the French and never

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1. *Wie Gott in Frankreich leben* — originally a Yiddish expression, which suggested that in secular France God could enjoy life without having to worry about the fastidious grievances of a faithful few.

realize that they are "studying" at all, because Lebovitz is both entertaining and witty, the mark of a good teacher.

To begin with, everything strikes the unsuspecting visitor as foreign and even downright hostile, including (in no particular order):

- the dress code (French men like very tight pants, shoes that are long and skinny with narrow, hard leather soles, and generally don a stylish scarf wrapped around its owner in a complex and highly idosyncratic collection of loose knots);
- the food (especially the order in which it is eaten and the fact that most French use a knife and fork at the same time);
- the water (rich in calcium, it sticks to your body or throat like cement);
- the tendency on the part of persons in authority to immediately say "no" to any reasonable request;
- the Catch-22-inducing bureaucracy;
- the capricious plumbing;
- the quirks of the French health care system;
- the exaggerated sense of privacy (never ask how much a person earns or even does for a living);
- generous displays of public nudity;
- neighbors (busybodies, for the most part, but not "super snoops" when compared to the rapidly disappearing concierge);
- shopping (a day at the BHV[2] department store is like shopping at a Home Depot that is only 10% its normal size in America);
- grocery shopping in your local Franprix (a sometimes nasty experience for anyone used to spotless American supermarkets, where employees actually can get on your nerves by constantly asking if you "found everything ok");
- the mysteries of the cheese tray (don't be a pig, or at least select the delights offered in the right order and make a *bona fide* effort to cut each cheese correctly);
- strikes in public transportation (a curse that affects every resident sooner rather than later).

The 29 vignettes that make up this book cover every aspect of the author's apprenticeship, regaling us with stories of his encounters with chefs and their staff, as well as introducing us to a spate of unforgettable characters: an idiomatic cleaning lady, sullen store clerks, morose bank tellers, to name just a few. This is a book about French culture as much as French cuisine. To be sure, Lebovitz sometimes exaggerates, but the experienced traveler recognizes the rhetorical flourish and appreciates the humor. After a while, the newcomer to Paris gets the hang of things, or returns home,disillusioned but one experience the richer. Lebovitz writes with hindsight as one who has learned the ropes the hard way, through a long and sometimes painful process of trial and error.

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2. A shopper's paradise it is not. The abbreviation BHV stands for *Bazar de l'Hôtel de Ville*, where the word "*bazar*" aptly captures the pandemonium that reigns on a busy day in this nineteenth-century Parisian institution in the rue de Rivoli.

This delightful account of daily life in the City of Light with its many mouth-watering recipes can be read in installments, much like the daily comic strip in the newspapers, constantly amazing and amusing us by its wit and panache. The author's descriptions are borderline poetic and it is hard not to be moved by the pure joy he experiences handling that quintessential French totem, the baguette. The following evocation is not exactly reminiscent of the poet Francis Ponge or the semiotician Roland Barthes (both famous for their lyrical rendering of French bread), but admirable for the sheer enthusiasm and excitement it conveys: "The moment I grabbed my loaf, I could feel the heat radiating through my hand and could barely wait until I was outside before I tore off and devoured the prized crusty end, *le quignon*. By the time I reached the top floor of my building, I had polished off half the baguette, and there was a telltale trail of little flaky crumbs behind me to prove it" (264).

I can't vouch for the recipes, but the instructions look pretty straightforward to me and they sure look yummy!

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## Japanese

**García, Héctor.** *Kirai. A Geek in Japan. Discovering The Land of Manga , Anime, Zen, and The Tea Ceremony.* **Tokyo; Rutland, Vermont; Singapore**: Tuttle Publishing, 2010. ISBN: 978-4-8053-1129-5; E-mail: i**nfo@tuttlepublishing.com**; Web site: **http://www.tuttle.co.jp**; **phone: 1-802-773-8930; fax: 1-802-773-6993.**

Héctor García, the author of *A Geek in Japan*, was born in Spain, in 1981. García is a software engineer and self-avowed "geek" who moved to Japan in 2004, and has been living in Tokyo ever since. Soon after his arrival in the land of the Rising Sun, he began to document his experiences by creating a blog, **http://www.kirainet.com**, also known as *A Geek in Japan*. The blog now ranks as one of the top ten blogs about Japan, receiving an average of a million visits per month.

The book under review consists of twelve chapters. By way of introduction, the author simply states that he is "a person fascinated by learning and discovering new things" (4). *A Geek in Japan* tells the story of someone "fascinated by Japan, and with learning and discovering all about its culture and traditions" (5); however, this is not a traditional, heavy-handed academic introduction to Japan. Far from it. As a native-born teacher of Japanese language and culture in the U.S., I can sense Garciá *sensei*'s enthusiasm and fascination with my homeland. The book is well organized, well conceived and helps readers to discover, understand, and appreciate the culture and traditions of Japan on their own. As stated on the book jacket, *A Geek in Japan* reinvents the culture guide for the Internet age. In the opinion of this reviewer, it contains many features that appeal to a young audience raised on the Internet, and each chapter provides a comprehensive description of the Japanese people and society today, thereby promoting a better understanding of Japan and the Japanese way of life. As such, this is the ultimate pedagogical text: it holds students' interest and it also teaches them something.

To start us off, the author introduces the origins of Japan culture, a country and culture very foreign to most foreign students, whether European or America and provides us with a brief overview of Japanese geography, history, and mores. In three short blog-like introductory entries, our guide gives us the bare minimum needed in order to understand anything at all about the country we are about to visit.

Chapters 1 and 2 discuss the *Origins of Japanese Culture* and *The Traditional Arts*, containing just enough information for readers in order to know what to expect and how to react to everything they are likely to encounter during a visit. This initial survey emphasizes the role of tradition in the social organization of Japanese society, but it also outlines the cultural achievements of each historical period by outlining the elements that have affected the modernization and psychological make-up of Japanese people and culture, including sections on language, the warrior code (*bushido*), geishas, religion, philosophy, religion, temples and shrines. The typical entry is about one page long and is accompanied by intelligently chosen photos, confirming the old adage that a picture says more than a thousand words.

Chapter 3, *The Unique Japanese Character*, introduces important concepts deeply rooted in Japanese society. Japan has a code of etiquette, a code that governs the expectations of social behavior and which is essential to understanding people. These cultural characteristics provide the symbolic aspects of Japanese behavior, the non-verbal ways in which Japanese people communicate with each other. Chapter 4, *Curiosities and Symbols*, identifies and studies a wide array of totemic symbols, all typically "Japanese," and especially striking to Western eyes.

Chapter 5, *The Japanese at Work*, attempts to explain why the Japanese economy has been so successful, at least until the bubble burst in the 1990s. Was this phenomenal success a fluke, or was it somehow related to a "Japanese" way of doing business, based on traditional social mores? "The head that sticks out gets cut off," goes an old proverb, and there is something to be said for not attracting attention in Japan. But how then explain the incredible success of Toyota and the constant quest to improve and to always satisfy the customer, so characteristic of all Japanese businesses? Attendants greet shoppers before and after they leave a store, whether or not they have purchased anything. If a Japanese customer does buy something, s/he wants to feel reassured that it is the very best product on the market.

Chapter 6, *Japanese Society & Daily Life*, offers a potpourri of topics about which Westerners are likely to have firmly entrenched and preconceived opinions concerning everything from personal safety to suicide. In point of fact, Japan is safer than any other postmodern Western society; and "no," Japanese do not commit suicide anymore than do Americans. Actually, the Austrians, Finns, Hungarians, and Poles are more inclined to do themselves in, regardless of the economy.

Chapter 7, *Japan Today*, focuses on social units, such as the Japanese work ethic, group identity, family life, and many more topics relevant to daily life in Japan. Sections on contemporary and traditional culture of Japan introduce readers to Japanese life and thought, customs and manners, traditional theater and arts, and food, thus opening new perspectives on Japanese culture. Together, the sections in this chapter introduce the customs and manners that Japanese society has observed for many years and that have helped smooth relations among people and inform the way people deal

with each other. The author's approach is strictly hands-on and based on his personal observations and his "geek" point of view while living in Japan; however, I will say this: for the most part, they are right on target.

Chapters 8, 9 and 10 examine the world of popular culture, including *manga* and *anime*, music, movies, and television. The chapters on *manga* and *anime* are a given, since both are typical products of Japanese popular culture that have caught on in the rest of the world and probably are far better known than any nineteenth-century woodcut print. *Anime* is a unique artistic product of Japanese origin, which, as it turns out, is a huge commercial and cultural export and, therefore, a global phenomenon. Little wonder that so many students are attracted to Japanese language and culture since they were raised on a diet of *manga* and *anime*.

The last two chapters, Chapters 11 and 12, *Visiting Tokyo* and *Traveling Around Japan*, have very useful information for anyone who wants to visit Tokyo, and especially young people. All the hip areas are included, and readers are treated to numerous tips on how to get around and make the most of their time in Japan. I am surprised not to see this book in the travel section of major bookstores like Barnes & Noble. It has a lot more depth, perspective, and scope than the average travel guide, even though it does not—needless to say—contain hotel and restaurant information.

I have used this text to teach Japanese culture in translation in a General Education course, and my students love it. Reviewing this text, I cannot stress enough the attractiveness of this slim, seemingly "weird" book. My husband found it at Narita airport as we were about to board our flight back to the U.S. I looked at it and decided, right then and there, that this was going to be my new text for my HUMA 280: Introduction to Japanese Culture and Society courses, which typically enrolls non-majors with no previous knowledge of Japan. *A Geek in Japan* (I am speaking of the text and not my husband!) is conceptually imaginative and will inspire college students to go to the next level and learn Japanese. In fact, several of my students already have begun to study Japanese language, as a result. I cannot think of a higher compliment for a book written by a "kid" who is barely thirty years old.

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**Author's Response**

I wrote this book to share what I have learned about Japan through my experiences while living in Tokyo. I hope it helps the reader to gain a better understanding of Japan and to fall in love with the people and the culture like I did. Thanks for reading me!

I would be really happy if my book helped "inspire college students to go to the next level and learn Japanese." That would more than answer my expectations!

Héctor García

## Spanish

**Blanco, José and María Colbert.** *Enfoques: Curso intermedio de lengua española*. **3rd edition. Boston: Vista Higher Learning, 2012. Includes Student Activities Manual, DVD video program, WebSAM and Supersite, Instructor's Resource Manual, Testing Program with audio, Overheads, Student Activities Manual Answer Key, vText. ISBN: 978-1-60576-883-0 (Instructor's Annotated Edition).**

For those who have used the first-year Spanish textbook *Vistas*, the intermediate Spanish textbook *Enfoques: Curso intermedio de lengua española* will be very familiar. Vista Higher Learning publishes both books and which have similar layout, graphics, organization, and exercises. Ideal for first two semesters of college study, *Enfoques* takes an interactive, proficiency-oriented, and communicative approach. It pays significant attention to all four language skills and to cultural competency, and it includes many activities that fulfill one or more of the goals of the national standards' Communication mode. These are designated in the Instructor's Annotated Edition with the special National Standards icon. Most of the changes in the third edition of *Enfoques* are additions to exercises, video-based activities, and the online review section. The three most significant changes to the online materials are the audio version of all literary and cultural readings; *Supersite Plus*, enabling single access to the student activities manual and the *Supersite*; and *vText*, a complete online version of the student edition textbook, which is completely interactive and includes links to the instructor's grade book. To access the online site, students must purchase a password. Also, several of the readings and a few films have been changed for the third edition, including new readings by Rosario Castellanos and Jorge Luis Borges.

The textbook is divided into twelve lessons, each consisting of the following sections: *Contextos* (theme vocabulary), *Fotonovela* (a situational comedy), *Enfoques* (cultural topics by region), *Estructura* (grammar), *Cinemateca* (short films), and *Lecturas* (short literary and cultural readings). Each lesson ends with a vocabulary list of important words introduced in the lesson. A reference section at the end of the textbook contains further instruction on grammar, a glossary of grammatical terms, verb conjugation tables, and Spanish-English/English-Spanish vocabulary.

Each lesson includes a theme around which most of the activities, readings, and the short film that make up the lesson revolve. Most lend themselves to high-frequency topics of conversation, such as daily life, health, personal relations, travel, work, and leisure activities. However, *Enfoques* also includes lesson themes on popular culture and mass communication, art and literature, politics and religion, and history and civilization. Each lesson begins by stating the communicative goals for the lesson and then moves to the *Contextos* section, including pertinent vocabulary and related activities, which progress from listening comprehension to discrete-item exercises and, finally, to open-ended oral tasks for small groups.

The next section, *Fotonovela*, summarizes in ten photos the action and dialogue in one scene of a situational comedy about the everyday adventures of a magazine staff. Each lesson presents a new episode. Comprehension questions and group activities expand on the situation portrayed in the *fotonovela* and encourage students to compare cultures. In Lesson 3, for example, the *fotonovela* touches on routine errands

the characters may have to do. The expansion activities for this segment has students consider such culturally-constructed customs as employee lunch time, time of day of lunch, business hours, and where and how one pays telephone and electricity bills. The *fotonovela* can be viewed during or outside of class via the online supersite. The *Enfoques* section looks at an interesting and significant aspect of life in a particular Hispanic country or region. A page-long reading is followed by several shorter items related to the topic; for example, a list of regional vocabulary, and then a follow-up section of questions and group activities. The section ends with activities about the *Flash Cultura* video found on the *Supersite*. The theme in the *Enfoques* section in Lesson 7 is science and technology, and presents an interesting reading on the long history of film animators from Argentina. There is a short reading on an annual contest in Argentina organized by the Ministry of Science, Technology and Productive Innovation for the best inventions. The *Flash Cultura* video for the lesson presents other remarkable inventions by Argentinians, such as the auditory signal on traffic lights that alert the blind when it is safe to cross the street. The *Estructura* section for each lesson presents explanations of three matters of grammar or syntax. Each explanation, written in English, is followed by directed exercises and then open-ended activities that prompt students to engage in personalized communication using the lesson's grammar and vocabulary. Page numbers refer students to the grammar manual at the end of the book, where they will find further directed and open-ended practice. The grammar manual also explains other points not included in the main lesson sections of the textbook, such as: telling time, *si* clauses with compound tenses, adverbs, expressions of time with *hacer*, and past participles used as adjectives. The *Cinemateca* section is organized around a short, in some cases award-winning, drama film, viewable on the online *Supersite*. The 12 films provide students with authentic language input from different regions of the Spanish-speaking world. Lesson 7 presents "Happy Cool" (14 minutes long), a tongue-in-cheek look at Argentina's long-lasting economic crisis, in which the protagonist attempts to solve his economic problems through suspended animation and then gets "unfrozen" after the crisis has ended. This section also contains pre- and post-viewing activities (written and oral) and a scene-by-scene summary with stills from the film. Finally, the lesson concludes with two readings: one a literary work, the other an essay. Both have pre- and post-reading activities and both can be listened to on the *Supersite*. One important feature of the section devoted to the literary reading is that it includes explanations and practice of literary techniques important to the reading. I found the cultural essays to be stimulating and refreshing, and I think they should work well in motivating student interest and involvement. The section ends with a group oral activity on the lesson theme, followed by a writing exercise. This activity in lesson eleven asks students to imagine they work for the mayor's office in their city and have been asked to create a pamphlet to explain the voting process to the city's new citizens who are going to vote for the first time the voting process.

The WebSAM (the online student activities manual) and the *Supersite* provide numerous activities for students to complete and submit to the instructor. They include, for example, fill-in-the-blank, multiple choice, question and answer, open-ended writing in response to a prompt, and flashcards for vocabulary review. Many of the activities include an audio component to model pronunciation. All exercises and

activities are integrated into the instructor's online grade book and offer the instructor different grading options. Users of the *Vistas* program online materials will find the *Enfoques* website easy to manage, since both have the same organization and layout. Yet another pedagogical tool available with *Enfoques* is Wimba Pronto, which has online synchronous chat, online tutoring, and online office hour capabilities.

The *Enfoques* program has many features that make it a very good choice for students at the intermediate level. With its abundance of exercises, readings, film and cultural material, instructors have great flexibility in organizing their courses according to their specific objectives and time constraints. Particularly appealing are the films, literary and cultural readings, and the readings focusing on people, customs and events in different countries and regions. By their length—neither too short to allow for details and depth, nor too long to make their inclusion in a course at this level problematic-- the readings suggest that students likely will become interested. The literary selections are all by highly regarded authors from across the Hispanic world, and the number of awards won by some of the films in the program attests to their strong human appeal. Another feature I personally find attractive is having all these readings in one textbook, rather than in a separate reader. Moving from one activity to another is faster and helps students discover relationships among the different sections. It also reduces the problem of students—or the instructor—of forgetting to bring one of the textbooks to class. Also, I find that the focus on politics and religion, literature and the arts, history and civilization, and popular culture and mass media invites instructors to stress the importance of these themes in all areas of the undergraduate curriculum. While some textbooks include references to these themes, it is unusual to have them as the main focus of so many chapters. Given the important relation of languages to those subjects, and the importance of the liberal arts education in understanding the world within and beyond one's own culture, these lessons help make the case that they merit special attention.

Grammar explanations, for the most part, are clear and concise and accompanied by examples. At the same time, some explanations would be more helpful to learners at this level if they were detailed and included more examples. A case in point is the explanation of the preterit and imperfect tenses. Since these two tenses typically cause so much confusion for native English speakers, a little more space devoted to explaining verbal aspect and to providing examples in context would be very helpful for students and instructors alike. I also think such an addition would give students who had used the *Vistas* textbook as their first-year text—which contains very similar explanations—a different, and important, perspective from which to understand these two tenses. Anyone who has consulted different textbooks and linguists' explanations of Spanish grammar and syntax knows that the differences in explanation can be very instructive. Nonetheless, as I hope I have made clear, *Enfoques* combines many excellent features that make this program highly suitable for a variety of intermediate-level course formats. Finally, not the least of its attractions are its physical appearance: the lovely photos and color drawings; the large color maps; the easy-to-follow layout; the clearly-indicated section markers, and the handy (not overly big or unwieldy) size of the textbook itself.

John F. Day
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**Publisher's Response**

I am pleased to respond to Professor John F. Day's review of *Enfoques: Curso intermedio de lengua española, Third Edition*. I was delighted to read his many accolades because, frankly, the review read like something we the publishers would write to promote the textbook. Of special mention is Professor Day's observation regarding the textbook's strong focus on diverse aspects of Spanish-speaking culture. In addition to the conventional topics of personal relations, health, and leisure activities, the coverage of additional cultural topics like the arts, history, and mass media stresses the interdisciplinary nature of language study. Professor Day noted that the films and literary and cultural readings in *Enfoques* are of an appropriate length, not too short or too long, to engage without frustrating the intermediate Spanish student. The reviewer indicates that their strong human appeal is in part due to the inclusion of works by highly regarded and award-winning authors and directors. Professor Day points out that conducting class becomes easier when the grammar and literary content are contained in one textbook, thereby eliminating the need for separate texts.

We are also very grateful to Professor Day for his critique that *Enfoques* should devote more space to explaining the difference between the preterit and imperfect tenses. He raises the valid argument that it is important to explain this important verbal distinction from an angle other than the one presented in some of our introductory Spanish titles, and we will take it into account upon developing the next edition of *Enfoques*.

Armando Brito
Senior Consulting Editor
Vista Higher Learning

**Chase, Robert O. and Clarisa B. Medina de Chase.** *An Introduction to Spanish for Health Care Workers.* **3rd edition. Yale University Press, 2010. Includes: textbook, DVD, and companion Website. ISBN: 978-0300124262. $60.00. For ordering information, visit https://yalepress.yale.edu/YupCart/Cart.asp?prodid=0300124260.**

As universities, workplaces, and other institutions continue to add Spanish special topics courses, publishers work to meet this challenge by publishing new titles. One textbook that has solid footing in the field is the third edition of Chase and Medina de Chase's *An Introduction to Spanish for Health Care Workers: Communication and Culture*. As the title suggests, this textbook is designed specifically for the beginner level and focuses on communication and cultural awareness; grammar is covered, but has a less central role. Chapters are organized around real-life health care interactions with selected grammar and vocabulary to develop Spanish communication skills.

The text under review consists of twelve chapters and, in the experience of this reviewer, offers too much to squeeze into just one semester, but perhaps not enough to

fill a two-semester sequence. One factor that is both an advantage and disadvantage is that the authors are health care professionals who have entered the language teaching field rather than teachers who have studied medical language needs. Clearly, they have developed a text based on authentic communication needs; however, at the same time, this book does not have the "feel" of an introductory textbook with a medical focus. For example, the book follows a traditional path, beginning with greetings and high frequency verbs such as *ser*, *estar*, and *tener*, but also includes both direct and indirect object pronouns in Chapter 5, all in the space of just four pages. Object pronouns are presented, beginning with direct objects, followed by two exercises; indirect objects with three exercises follow. The discussion of double object pronoun usage is addressed in Chapter 6 with the presentation of the verb *dar*. This is just one example of a complex grammatical structure that, I think, could be covered in more depth. Further, the pacing and organization of the content can be uneven at times and some instructors may wish to insert some lessons out of sequence, as well as to supplement some topics with additional materials.

The book provides cultural sections in English that cover larger topics but also has small tidbits of cultural information interspersed in all chapters. The Cultural Note sections at the end of each chapter offer helpful, practical information about both Latinos and those who care for them. Smaller pieces of cultural knowledge are interwoven in the structure and vocabulary content areas. For example, when discussing adjectives of nationality, the authors tell us that "Puerto Ricans may call themselves *boricuas* or *boriqueños*; Dominicans, *quisqueyanos*, and Costa Ricans, *ticos*" (16). The authors present concise, but insightful cultural information while avoiding stereotyping, by qualifying statements with "Latinos *tend to…*" or "Latinos *often…*" Students will find the information applicable almost immediately in any interaction with a Latino patient.

The third edition contains a DVD with different health care scenes depicted. The video clips are helpful and may be used in class or assigned as homework, since each textbook comes with a DVD. There are varying types of post-viewing activities, but the inclusion of pre-viewing activities would also be helpful. Some experienced students might be distracted by the actors' occasional medically inaccurate behavior; but, the language and different accents offer valuable insight into the variety of speech health care professionals are likely to encounter. Given that there is no other listening component, instructors will want to capitalize on the input offered by the video clips.

In addition to the DVD, the textbook provides a free companion Website that offers tips for teachers and students, helpful links, an audio section, and a learning check section. The "Tips for Teachers" page offers four suggestions: how to market a health care language course, how to use video in the classroom, two role play scenarios, and student project ideas. The "Tips for Students" page is similarly brief, including a section on how best to acquire (versus learn) Spanish, as well as an explanation of how verbs are presented in the text. The audio is identical to the DVD content, but no disc is required; so, this may be helpful in a language laboratory setting. The learning check is a quiz feature encouraging students to assess their learning by themselves. The instructions are in Spanish, but may be translated to English with the click of a button. Sample tasks include matching vocabulary with definitions, selecting logical responses

to questions, matching verbs and subjects, and responding to brief listening sections. The listening clips can be repeated as many times as needed, though they may be very challenging for true beginners. If an error is made on any question, a student is simply notified "*estás equivocado*," but no explanation is provided. The entire learning check is timed, results may be printed, and a score of 80% is set as a "passing" grade. Students may print their results, making this feature an option for end-of-chapter homework assignments.

All written exercises in the book have answers in the appendix, making this book helpful for courses offered in a workplace setting. If offered on a credit-basis, however, the answer key and lack of a workbook may present a challenge if the instructor wishes to assign graded assignments throughout the semester. The exercises in the textbook are helpful, providing a variety of communicative activities; the *Drama Imprevisto* sections are particularly creative and engaging. The authors are also careful to share a myriad of regional differences and pithy sayings in order to help students remember key vocabulary and grammatical structures. For example, when covering injuries, the authors share a tip for remembering the word for "swelling:" "Here is a mnemonic device: If you can pinch an inch, it must be *hinchazón!*" (71).

All in all, this textbook offers practical information for a beginning-level Spanish class. After just one semester, students will be able to conduct an admissions interview, give vital signals, obtain a patient medical history, offer medical advice, and much more. Students will find themselves motivated by the authentic nature of the communication and cultural information; it is clear the authors speak from extensive personal experience. For instructors of non-credit courses in the workplace this textbook offers solid language development opportunities. College instructors, however, may find the need to adapt and design materials more than they might compared to using a traditional language textbook with all its ancillary materials. If the authors choose to focus on one context over the other, a future edition of the book may be even stronger. As the market for medical Spanish textbooks continues to grow, I look forward to seeing if Chase and Medina de Chase publish additional titles in the field of medical Spanish.

Kelly Conroy
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**Publisher's Response**

Yale University Press thanks *The NECTFL Review* and reviewer Kelly Conroy for the thoughtful review of the Chases' book. As she stated, *An Introduction to Spanish for Health Care Workers,* 3rd Edition, is a culturally-rich resource conceived to respond to the increasing interest in medical Spanish courses and workshops. This classroom text uses readings, exercises, and interactive activities to integrate Spanish medical vocabulary, grammar, and colloquial terms that all those in the health professions need most. The authors thoughtfully explain Hispanic customs and communication styles in an engaging manner. Yale is pleased to announce that we will publish a fourth

edition in late summer 2012. New to this edition are a full-color design; an expanded website with downloadable artwork, exercise props, and more activities; an updated lexicon that includes vocabulary related to new medications and current-event topics such as cholera; and more exercises in the target language. Many of these additions and updates address the concerns Ms. Conroy noted in her review. We are pleased that Ms. Conroy's experience with the book has been a positive one overall, and hope the fourth edition improves student and teacher experience. If instructors would like to request an examination copy of this or any of our language textbooks, they may do so at **yalebooks.com/languageexam**.

Karen Stickler
Academic Discipline Marketer
Yale University Press

**Chiquito, Ana Beatriz.** *A Handbook of Contemporary Spanish Grammar*. **Boston, MA: Vista Higher Learning, 2012. ISBN: 9-781617-672071.**

Ana Beatriz Chiquito's *A Handbook of Contemporary Spanish Grammar* (2012) offers thirty-one chapters of thorough, accessible grammar explanations accompanied by a unique online component that provides more than just practice exercises for postsecondary students at the intermediate and advanced levels. The text can be used as a stand-alone textbook for grammar courses, a companion text, and it could also be used for independent study because the grammatical explanations are straightforward and easy to understand. Its contents are aligned with the new guidelines, as well as the latest updates and revisions, set forth by the *Real Academia Española* in order to cover all major grammatical topics. The author not only provides succinct explanations in a variety of forms (e.g., tables, examples), she also takes the time to note lexical and regional variations in the Spanish language. The text is rich with examples that demonstrate contemporary language use.

The book is divided into six principal sections: (1) 31 chapters of grammar explanations clearly divided into sections and subsections; (2) verb conjugation tables; (3) a glossary of Spanish-to-English common word combinations; (4) practice activities containing over 400 exercises; (5) answer keys for the exercises; and (6) an index to the grammatical structures found in the text. Chapter 1 covers introductory concepts such as pronunciation, the alphabet, accentuation, and punctuation. Chapters 2-5 cover nouns, adjectives, determiners, and articles; Chapter 6 covers the use of quantifiers in terms of numbers (e.g., cardinal numbers, fractions, time, and date). In Chapters 7-12, the author discusses the usage of indefinite quantifiers, demonstratives, possessives, adverbs, and prepositions. Personal pronouns are discussed in eight sections in Chapter 13, while the topic of questions and interrogative words are introduced in Chapter 14. Relative pronouns and adverbs, as well as conjunctions, are presented in Chapters 15-16. In Chapter 17, the present indicative is discussed, followed by the preterit and imperfect tenses in Chapters 18-19. Chapter 19 covers the use of the present perfect and the past perfect verb tenses before the future and conditional verb tenses are discussed (Chapters 20-21). Beginning in Chapter 22 the subjunctive mood is introduced before discussing the use of the subjunctive in Chapter 23. In Chapter

24, the imperative is presented. Non-finite verb forms (e.g., gerunds) are the subject of Chapter 25. In Chapter 26, the author discusses verb periphrases (verb combinations consisting of an auxiliary verb and a main verb) and modal verbs. Reflexive pronouns and verbs (Chapter 27), passive and impersonal constructions (Chapter 28) are found immediately afterward. The book concludes with a section on the notions of *to be* and *to become* in Spanish (Chapter 29), the use of *ser* and *estar* (Chapter 30), and indirect discourse (Chapter 31).

On the first page of each chapter a sidebar summarizes the chapter's content. Additionally, each chapter is clearly marked with numbered headings that help learners navigate the grammar explanations and easily locate cross-references. A sidebar is also placed at the end of each chapter that includes the specific activity sequence with its corresponding page numbers.

In addition to the text, the publisher provides an online component designed to support students with auto-graded textbook activities and quizzes for self-assessment. Students can log on to a VISTA Supersite and do various activities to reinforce newly learned structures for each chapter. Additionally, this Supersite provides learners with the *Wimba Voice Board* that allows students to create original oral activities. Supersite Plus includes all of the aforementioned components, as well as audio and video conferencing, instant messaging, an online whiteboard in order to view and edit a shared canvas in real time, an application sharing system, and online office hours for the instructor.

I recommend this book to postsecondary students. The content is easy to understand and most chapters are relatively short. The examples are straightforward and the combination of textbook and online activities gives learners multiple opportunities to practice the structures presented in the book. While the text is aimed at postsecondary students, high school students studying Spanish in advanced-level courses might find this text of value as a reference tool to review previously learned topics. *A Handbook of Contemporary Spanish Grammar* covers most of the much-needed grammatical concepts, as well as language usage in Spain and Latin America. Learners interested in Spanish grammar are sure to find the text easy to navigate and inexpensive to purchase.

Peter B. Swanson
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**Publisher's Response**

I am pleased to respond to Professor Peter B. Swanson's review of *A Handbook of Contemporary Spanish Grammar*. The publisher is grateful to him for pointing out so many of what we agree are the textbook's strengths. As the reviewer aptly noted, its design allows for easy navigation and facilitates the comprehension of a near-exhaustive list of grammar topics. Explanations were indeed written to be as succinct and straightforward as possible and representative of the linguistic diversity across the Hispanophone world.

As Professor Swanson indicated, the online component provides a wealth of additional activities. The handbook can certainly serve as the main text for a post-intermediate grammar course as well as a companion reference manual for students of intermediate and advanced Spanish. We appreciate the reviewer's final point, in which he emphasizes the textbook's affordability.

Armando Brito
Senior Consulting Editor
Vista Higher Learning

**Cuadrado, Charo, Pilar Melero, Enrique Sacristán, Enrique, and Jan Underwood.** *Protagonistas: A Communicative Approach*. **Boston, MA: Vista Higher Learning, 2012. Includes: Workbook/Lab Manual, Instructors Audio and DVD Set, Chapter Lesson Plans, Testing Program. ISBN: 978-1-60576-978-3.**

*Protagonistas: A Communicative Approach* is a European-produced textbook especially formatted for wider use in the United States. This formatting includes the use of visuals and some basic layout makeovers. *Protagonistas* is an alternative to the traditional introductory Spanish textbooks currently used in the United States and can be used in a two-, three-, or four-semester format. The text is divided into nineteen units or lessons. The first lesson serves as an introduction. Each of the subsequent 18 lessons is divided into two separate parts. What separates this text from other elementary Spanish texts in the market is the fact that it employs the European model of embedding all grammar, vocabulary, and culture in a highly communicative approach.

Instructors receive an annotated text, a workbook/lab manual, an audio and video DVD set, the testing program, online program access, and detailed lesson plans for each chapter. The student package includes the text and the workbook/lab manual. If they so desire, instructors may also require student packages that include the text, as well as a website key for the online version of the workbook and lab manual, in addition to additional exercises and the virtual text. Students also get access to a self-evaluation with instant feedback, which they can use to gauge their progress.

*Protagonistas* is not structured like other textbooks, which have vocabulary in one section and grammar in subsequent sections, with culture mixed in at the beginning or end of each section. In *Protagonistas*, the vocabulary and grammar are embedded in the communicative process. Students begin using spoken Spanish on the first page of each lesson. At the end of each lesson, there is a review of each grammar point introduced in the lesson as well as a list of new vocabulary words. Culture is introduced throughout each lesson in the form of communicative situations and images of famous people, places, and things. Students must talk with each other about these people, places, and things with each other in order to learn more about them. At the end of each lesson and before the grammar explanations, there are two interactive review sections: *Tarea Final* and *Yo puedo*. These sections are designed to allow students to demonstrate their abilities to handle the vocabulary and grammatical components presented in the lesson. They are confidence builders and, as with all activities in the lessons, are scaffolded to help students create meaningful utterances on their own. At the end of most units, there is a lecture in the form of either an article or a comic strip, which the students can

use to practice reading. Also, there is a writing opportunity for practice. Finally, there is a component called Flash Culture which, through video, exposes students to a native speaker and his or her modeling of the vocabulary and grammatical structures learned in the unit in authentic situations.

Students are exposed to a wide variety of activities to help them focus on spoken language and communication. Instructors are also given a multitude of options with which to help students. They have access to Supersite exercises, which they can assign to students along with the workbook and lab exercises. The newest element, to which both students and instructors have access, is Supersite Plus, which includes the Supersite activities, as well as Wimba capabilities for student chat, oral communication, and recording. The instructor can grade and give feedback to students as well. Instructors also have testing options for each lesson and unit. In addition, they are given access to the audio scripts and a detailed, multi-page lesson plan for each lesson, thus giving them more options and time to incorporate meaningful activities and practice. Finally, they have a video and audio DVD that has a *Fotonovela* showing students how grammar concepts should be used and produced in authentic situations.

*Unidad 1* introduces students to interrogative words and the verb *ser*. *Unidad 2* continues with the uses of *ser*, numbers, and basic verb conjugations with some stem-changing verbs. The next two units, *Unidad 3* and *Unidad 4*, focus on more stem-changing verbs and other irregular verbs in the present tense. They also cover the preposition *por*, comparatives, demonstratives, direct object pronouns, the verbs *estar* and *haber*, as well as indirect object pronouns and more stem-changing verbs. *Unidad 5* covers the preterit tense, time expressions, possessive adjectives, and irregular preterits. *Unidades* 6 and 7 introduce the present perfect, reflexive verbs, and the present-progressive tense. *Unidades* 8-11 cover the preterit, imperfect and present perfect tense, negative words, comparisons of equality, the absolute superlative and the informal commands. The future tense is introduced in *Unidad 12*. *Unidad 13* is a review of the past tenses in different contexts. *Unidad 14* is a review of the imperfect and an introduction to indirect discourse. In *Unidades* 15-18, the subjunctive is introduced and commands are revisited and expounded upon.

*Protagonistas: A Communicative Approach* is a brand new and innovative text that, for the first time, focuses on oral production. The program relies on direct use of the vocabulary and structures without rote memorization or drills. The pattern it follows is See-Practice-Formally Review. The text is an adaptation of a European text that follows the European model of language instruction and learning with a significant cultural element to it. Essentially, *Protagonistas* text does what no other text does: it finds a way to integrate the spoken language into the college-level Spanish classroom every day, in every lesson.

Ryan Boylan
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**Publisher's Response**

I am pleased to respond to Professor Ryan Boylan's review of *Protagonistas: A Communicative Approach*. I was pleased to discover that Professor Boylan

enthusiastically describes the textbook as doing what no other text does, i.e., thoroughly integrate spoken Spanish into the classroom. The reviewer also rightly remarks how *Protagonistas* weaves culture into every page by introducing a variety of themes with which students interact over the course of a lesson. Students work through activities contextualized to the themes and meet *protagonistas* who live and work in those real-world environments. Professor Boylan notes that the performance of real-world tasks drives the pedagogy, allowing students to use purposeful Spanish from day one. Although he is right to point out that the textbook is a U.S. version of a program originally published in Europe, *Protagonistas* was reconceived to meet the realities of the U.S. language classroom while maintaining its unique pedagogical approach.

The publisher would like to point out that, although the grammar points are explained in a special section at the end of every lesson—that is, twice per unit—the instructor is always free to have students study this section in tandem with the preceding lesson's content. The implication should not be that grammar is unimportant but, rather, that students can focus on building their communication skills while in the classroom.

Armando Brito
Senior Consulting Editor
Vista Higher Learning

**Echenberg, Eva Neisser.** *Presente – Spanish Oral Presentations on Cultural Themes.* **Montreal: Miraflores, 2011. Pp. 192. Price: $38.00. ISBN: 978-2-923851-19-8 (all 8 sections). Individual section price: $9.99. For orders and further information, contact Miraflores, P.O. Box 458, Victoria Station, Montreal, QC H3Z 2Y6 Canada or Miraflores, P.O. 247, Richford, VT 05476. Tel: (514) 483-0722. Fax: (514) 483-1212. E-mail: miraflores@sympatico.ca. Web site: http://www.miraflores.org.**

In keeping with today's focus on oral proficiency, most world language teachers have their students do oral presentations. In addition to learning how to do an oral presentation, students learn about a specific subject, as does the audience, provided the subject has a broader appeal.

*Presente – Spanish Oral Presentations on Cultural Themes* by Eva Neisser Echenberg helps students improve in the area of oral proficiency. Available as downloads in PDF format, it offers approximately 800 multidisciplinary themes with highly meaningful context for oral presentations, which, effortlessly, guide students toward meaningful learning. To make it easy to use, *Presente* is divided into the following eight sections, each of which covers a different geographic area: *El mundo hispano*; *España*; *México*; *Los países andinos*; *El Cono Sur*; *Centroamérica*; *El Caribe*; and, *Los Estados Unidos*. Each section has between eight and fourteen topics. Each topic is divided into sub-topics that enable students working in groups to work and learn together, as well as to profit from peer feedback and fellow students' research. For example, for the topic "*Carretera Panamericana*," beginning-level students show a map and point to countries, capitals, and pictures of vehicles on the highway. For this very same topic, intermediate students talk about sections of the highway and explain why it has not been completed in Panama. Advanced students describe the highway at the border of

Chile and Argentina, a mountain pass, where there is a very large statue. Or, on the topic of "Guernica," one student talks about the painting, another about the painter, a third about the city of Guernica today and, at the more advanced level, a student recounts the story of the bombing by the Germans, as rendered immortal by Picasso's famous painting.

*Presente* is written entirely in Spanish. All topics have three levels of difficulty: A-beginner, B- intermediate, and, C-advanced. Every presentation topic in *Presente* includes instructions for the presenters; the first sentence or sentences for every presentation, helping students focus on the main points (Internet key words and not websites, since key words are timeless and websites sites are not); and, a corresponding assignment for the rest of the class, so as to involve each and every student in the presentation. Also included are teacher and student rubrics for evaluating an oral presentation that promote student self-analysis.

*Presente* does more than make it easy for teachers to incorporate the Culture standard of the National Standards for Foreign Language Learning. It promotes a positive view of other cultures so that students move beyond cultural stereotypes. Moreover, since the research for the oral presentations on cultural themes is based on the Internet, *Presente* fulfills the educational objective of having students use technology in meaningful ways.

In conclusion, finding a rich variety of subjects to motivate students in their work is one of the teachers' greatest challenges. And that is how *Presente* proves itself as a timesaving resource that integrates technology and addresses the wide range of personal interests of students. No matter what their background or interests, given the breath of topics provided in *Presente*, students should all be able to find a cultural theme to their liking. A preview on the Miraflores Website is available for every presentation topic. In fact, if any teacher who is considering adopting *Presente* is not comfortable downloading materials from their web site, Miraflores will provide a copy by e-mail.

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Buffalo, NY

**Publisher's Response**

Miraflores, the cultural publisher, wishes to thank Professor Eileen Angelini for her excellent review of *Presente – Spanish Oral Presentations on Cultural Themes*. We are delighted that she believes *Presente* "helps students improve in the area of oral proficiency… with highly meaningful context which, effortlessly, guide(s) students toward meaningful learning."

With an overload of information available, students need direction. *Presente* provides the tools to fulfill ACTFL's Culture standard and allows student to use technology in a meaningful way.

These are difficult times for educators. In order to make the Miraflores cultural material more accessible, we have posted all our publications on our website (**http://www.miraflores.org**). In addition, Miraflores now sells PDF downloads for very

modest sums. These include the *Presente - Oral Presentations*, as well as the more well known Miraflores thematic units (*Abrir paso*) and the writing activities on cultural themes (*Útil*). For further information, please visit our web site at **www.miraflores. org**.

Eva Echenberg
Miraflores

**Flores-Cuadra, Octavio, Emmanuel Paris-Bouvret, and Ana Perez-Gironés.** *En una palabra Puebla, México.* **Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2010. Includes CD-ROM, and a free, online instructional manual. ISBN: 978-1-58901-647-7. $29.95.**

*En una palabra Puebla, México*, is an engaging CD-ROM that explores a diverse population of fifteen citizens of Puebla and their use of ten different lexical concepts. The concepts included are: *ambición* (ambition), *amigos* (friends), *éxito* (success), *familia* (family), *felicidad* (happiness), *individualismo* (individualism), *libertad* (freedom), *orgullo* (pride), *país* (country), and *trabajo* (work). The basic premise of the CD is to present a sociolinguistic perspective on how a variety of citizens understand and interpret these concepts, based upon their own individual, cultural, and socioeconomic status. Even though these words are perceived as having a common core of easy transference from one language to another, the various speakers reveal a unique diversity that enhances their various meanings.

Navigating the software is simple. PC users will need Microsoft Windows XP with 512 MB RAM; MAC users, MAC OSX V10.4. The main menu supplies a brief explanation of the product and the teaching philosophy underlying it, which is to introduce Spanish students to the richness of a word's meanings via a plethora of perspectives. The program also seeks to provide an opportunity for students to develop their cultural competence and listening skills. In addition to this brief introduction to the product, there is a short pictorial presentation of various areas of interest in Puebla and their historical and cultural significance. Examples include: *La catedral* (Cathedral), *La iglesia de San Francisco* (Church of Saint Francis), *Biblioteca Palafoxiana* (Library), Cholula with its attending attractions of the Great Pyramid and the Church of Saint Mary of Tonantzintla. Also included in this introductory summary are several linguistic traits specific to this area of Mexico. Examples of these features include *cantadito* (the prolongation of the final syllable); *la conservación de la* /d/ *intervocálica* (conservation of the intervocalic /d/ sound); *reducción vocálica* (softening of the final vowel); *el seseo* (pronunciation of words beginning with *ce, ci, za, zo, zu, sa, se, si, so, su* as an /s/); and, finally, *muletillas* (short words or expressions which elaborate on a speaker's idea). *Muletillas* specific to Puebla are *y, este, pues,* and *eh*.

The fifteen participants are divided between seven males and eight females. The personal descriptions of each participant include their name, age, job or student status, and how long they have lived in Puebla. The participants range in age from 23 to 65 and are a sample of the rich diversity of occupations found in Puebla, including university students and professors, professional singers and musicians, administrators in the local *Universidad de las Americas,* poets, and market vendors. After opening the software, students simply click on one of the subjects, then select a word from the list

and listen to the description provided by the selected speaker. Students can navigate among speakers and listen to a variety of opinions based on gender, socioeconomic status, and age. This is a highlight of the program as there is considerable diversity of opinion among each individuals in how they interpret and define a particular concept. For example, the concept *amigo* (friend) for one of the female participants holds such a sacred intimacy that she claims to have no "friends" in a literal sense, except her mother and sisters. For another, an older gentleman of sixty-five, the term conveys the idea of how friends come to us in each segment of our lives. That is, we have working friends, church friends, family friends, and friends we have known all of our lives. The richness of each concept as reviewed by the fifteen participants underscores current discussion in academe regarding the importance of doing more than just translating vocabulary. A word's meaning evolves over time and is constantly under critical revision by the native speaker.

*En una palabra* was designed for speakers at an Intermediate level of proficiency. According to the ACTFL standards, listening comprehension is based primarily upon the amount of information listeners can glean from what they hear, and the inferences and connections they can make. For those at an Intermediate proficiency level this means being able to understand simple, sentence-length speech on familiar and everyday topics. Although *En una palabra* makes use of familiar themes covered in introductory Spanish courses, students at the intermediate level will profit most if the selections are replayed several times so as to catch all the nuances and meanings conveyed by the speakers. One of the tools that facilitates comprehension is the addition of a *glosario* (dictionary) at the left hand section of the page that supplies a standard definition of the term as found in the dictionary. If students are still in need of additional clues, the software does include a *transcripción* (transcription section), which provides the actual words of the speakers. Teachers could have students listen to the selected sections and, after classroom discussion, allow students to read over these transcriptions to verify whether or not they have understood the topic at hand. The frequency and redundancy of each concept reviewed certainly caters to students at the Low, Mid, and High levels of Intermediate proficiency.

One possible weakness of the program is its focus on Spanish as spoken by citizens of one particular area of Mexico rather than on a sampling of the rich variety of spoken Spanish throughout the country. While the linguistic idiosyncrasies of Puebla may hold great potential for students enrolled in a course on sociolinguistics, it is necessary for the instructor to carefully point out to students that this is only a snapshot of one specific area of Mexico and is not representative of the nation as a whole. Therefore, the usefulness of the program is somewhat limited in some courses in terms of its cultural significance, since not all textbooks introduce students to Puebla. What could have possibly enhanced the cultural appreciation for Puebla in this program would have been to include some actual video footage rather than just snapshots of the cultural and historical sites included in this section. To offset this shortcoming, there is a selection of websites that students can click on for more information about Puebla; but, it would have been preferable to include a separate component to make the program even more appealing to students who are accustomed to having this type of information supplied as a matter of course.

In addition to the strengths of the program as delineated above, what makes this program so valuable in the classroom is its versatility, which makes it possible to have students listen to native speakers and, based on the diverse backgrounds they represent, see how certain terms are used to express a wide range of meanings.

Douglas Mast
High School Spanish teacher
Manheim Township School District
Lancaster, PA

## Vietnamese

**Kershul, Kristine K.** *Vietnamese. A Language Map*. **Seattle, WA: Bilingual Books, Inc., 2010. ISBN: 0-944502-78-4.**

Vietnamese must be the toughest language I have tried to learn, even more difficult than Chinese. Japanese, by comparison, is easy, at least the grammar and pronunciation are easier. What makes Vietnamese so difficult is intonation. Just like in Chinese, a word can mean many things, depending on intonation. The written language is not so bad, mainly because Vietnamese uses a Roman alphabet—albeit with a system of diacritical marks, far more complicated than French and more like Czech. In fact, my word processing program does not include a few of these characters. The spelling in the following imaginary exchange, therefore, is partially inaccurate.

*Chào* (hi); *Ông manh không* ("How are you?" [speaking to a man]); *Bà khoè không* ("How are you?" [speaking to a woman]); *Tên tôi là Tom* ("my name is Tom"); *Tôi đến tu Mỹ* ("I'm from the USA"); *tôi là người Mỹ* ("I'm American"). Unfortunately, though, many diacritical marks in this language guide are too small for the average user to be able to see without a magnifying glass. Deciphering these cues, which seem to surround every other character of the alphabet, is no mean feat, even for a French professor like myself. In fact, it is possible to learn a great many words and phrases without being able to order a bowl of phu noodle soup. Believe me, I have tried and had to learn the hard way, through arduous practice with the locals. To complicate matters further, there are several quite different dialects, ranging from standard Vietnamese, spoken in the north (in the capital Hanoi) for example, to central and southern dialects (used in Ho Chi Minh City, the former capital of South Vietnam which locals still like to call Saigon).

Contrary to popular belief, the French colonial masters did not create the Romanized alphabet, *quoc ngu*. In fact, it dates back to the seventeenth century when European missionaries first arrived in Vietnam and devised a simple way of transcribing Vietnamese. Local notables decided to "go western," not so much to accommodate the boorish European colonizers as to mark Vietnam's independence vis-à-vis China, which had controlled the country for so many centuries. Until then, Chinese had been the official language. The French adopted *quoc ngu* for obvious reasons: to facilitate administration and make it possible for them to learn a modicum of the native language.

The phrase book under review here sets out to teach visitors a modicum of basic language so that they can make a good first impression and maybe get a bite to eat (though I would not bank on the latter). As someone who studied the basics (and always

tries to make a good first impression!), I remember being unable to communicate my urgent desire to indulge in my favorite spring rolls in a Western-style restaurant in Ho Chi Minh. I can only hope that I did not mispronounce a word and accidentally say something untoward.

The Language Map, a ten-page-leaflet, is divided into sections with useful vocabulary and short phrases: Meeting People, Asking Questions, Numbers, Telephone and Internet, Mail, Calendar, Time, Shopping, Hotels and Room Service, Money, Life's Little Emergencies, Sightseeing, Transportation, and Dining Out. A brief introduction to basic sounds and the six tones attempts the impossible: to guide foreigners to correct pronunciation. On the whole, Vietnamese. A Language Map, is a useful but limited tool. Bilingual Books offers similar language maps in about two dozen languages, from the commonly taught to the less commonly taught and, at $7.95, are eminently affordable. They are intended for travelers but can supplement a textbook because of their emphasis on practical language. For those serious about an academic approach to language, however, there is no substitute for a traditional classroom.

Tom Conner
Professor of Modern Languages
St. Norbert College
De Pere, WI

**Publisher's Response**

Thank you for your review of *VIETNAMESE. A language map®*. As always, your comments are appreciated. Our *Language Maps®* are designed for the traveler. They are easy to use, rugged and waterproof. Weighing only 2 ounces they slip into any traveler's backpack, handbag, briefcase, or beach bag.

I recently spent two weeks in Vietnam, traveling in both the southern and northern regions. My *Language Map®* served as my lifeline to communicating with the locals. I could snap it open and in an instant have access to hundreds of the most essential words and phrases.

Initially my pronunciation was not 100% correct, but it got better every day and the more I used the *Language Map®*, the more I improved and was able to be understood, order meals, secure a hotel room, and all the usual things travelers do. The "Dining Out" panel was my favorite. At each meal, I would experiment with a different type of food starting with an entry from the *Language Map®*—the experience was always enjoyable as the cuisine was delicious.

Another helpful feature is the layout of the *Language Map®*. The English word is first, then the Vietnamese, followed by the phonetics. Here's an example:

hello          *chào*          (chow)

If I didn't say the word correctly, I was able to show the word to a Vietnamese speaker, listen to the word being said, repeat it and do a better job the next time. The tones, described on the Alphabet panel of the *Language Map®*, can take a bit of practice for English speakers to reproduce comfortably, but that's part of the fun of learning a new language and exploring a foreign country.

Even in U.S. cities with vibrant Vietnamese communities, there are few options for taking a Vietnamese language class. While our *Language Maps*® are not designed to be a substitute for a traditional classroom, they do help to fill that void and are intended to show that anyone can learn and use a foreign language. With *VIETNAMESE a language map*,® anyone can travel to Vietnam and focus on having a good time, some great adventures, and not worry about the language. That's what I did!

Kristine K. Kershul
Publisher, Bilingual Books, Inc.

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# Reviewers Wanted

The Northeast Conference invites you to submit your name as a reviewer of textbooks, software, websites, programs, ancillaries, videos — in short, any product or opportunity or program that might be of interest to you and your colleagues. You can help others make their way through the wide array of materials they may see at a conference, in a catalogue, on a website, or through advertising! Share your knowledge and experience ... and see yourself in print! Don't be shy if you've never written for publication before; we are eager to work with you!

Reviewers are needed at all levels and in all languages. If you would be interested in exploring this possibility, would like to submit a review, or wish to receive materials to evaluate, please send your name, address, telephone and fax numbers, and e-mail address to Tom Conner (see below). If your company produces educational materials or provides educational services, and if you would like to have them reviewed in our journal, please contact Tom.

Guidelines for reviewers can be found at **http://www.nectfl.org/software.html**

Thomas S. Conner, Review Editor

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## 2013 CONFERENCE DATE AND LOCATION

### March 7–10, 2013

### Baltimore Marriott Waterfront Hotel

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# *In Memoriam*

## Protase E. "Woody" Woodford



Spanish teacher, linguist was passionate about life

Protase E. "Woody" Woodford, 77, of Hancock, New Hampshire, died Sunday, March 26, 2011. He was born on Sept. 10, 1934 in New York City, N.Y., the son of Editta Principe de Woodford and Protase D. Woodford. He lived in New Jersey for many years prior to moving to Hancock, New Hampshire 11 years ago.

Woody retired from the Educational Testing Service in Princeton, N.J., after 25 years, where he was director of test development, director of language programs, director of international testing programs and head of the Puerto Rico office. Prior to joining ETS, he taught Spanish for ten years in the public schools of New Jersey, after having received a B.A. from Montclair State Teachers College in New Jersey and an M.A. from Montclair and the University of Madrid in Spain.

In 1988, Woody was appointed distinguished linguist at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md. He was the author of over two-dozen Spanish and ESL textbooks for schools and colleges. He served as a consultant to the College Board, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, the American Council on Education, USAID, the Defense Language Institute, the United Nations Secretariat, UNESCO, the Organization of American States, the World Bank, the Japanese Ministry of International Trade and Industry, and many ministries of education in Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East. In the 1990s, he collaborated in the creation of a national center for educational evaluation in Egypt and helped establish national testing systems in Central and South America.

Woody served on and chaired the boards of trustees of numerous educational and social service organizations and was the recipient of many state and national awards for his professional contributions. He was a frequent keynote speaker at national and regional conferences.

He was also a professional narrator in English and Spanish whose "voice-over" clients included PBS, AT&T, U.S. News and World Report and many others.

Long after his retirement and move to New Hampshire, he returned to teaching Spanish at the Middlebury College summer program and at the Saint Patrick School in Jaffrey.

He is survived by his beloved wife of 51 years, Sally Ayers Woodford, a daughter, Alexandra A. Woodford of Greenfield, a son, Protase E. Woodford, Jr. and his wife, Chrysal Woodford, of Vineyard Haven, Mass., a granddaughter, Emmanuelle Grey Woodford, his sister, Marie Louise Woodford Principe of Ponce, Puerto Rico, and numerous cousins in Canada, Puerto Rico, and the U.S.

Woody loved history, Spain, the New York Times, and the New York Giants. He was devoted to his wife and family. He was passionate about life.

A private family celebration of his life was held.

Donations in Woody's memory be made to St. Patrick School, Jaffrey, 03452 (**saintpatschool.org**), The Harris Center for Conservation Education, 83 King's HWY, Hancock, 03449 (**harriscenter.org**), or a charity of your choice.

## Marilyn Barrueta



**Marilyn Barrueta** of McLean, VA died on Thursday, November 4, 2010. Marilyn is survived by many close friends, colleagues and former students. A Memorial Service waas held at the in Arlington, VA on Saturday, November 27. Contributions may be made in her honor to FLTEACH, **www.cortland.edu/flteach/donations.html** or The National Teachers Hall of Fame **www.nthf.org/ supportnthf.htm**.

In Mexican tradition, there are three deaths... The first death is when our bodies cease to function; when our hearts no longer beat of their own accord. The second death comes when the body is lowered into the ground, returned to mother earth. The third death, the most definitive death, is when there is no one left alive to remember us. For some, like Marilyn, the third death never occurs.

Sarah Shackelford
Harrison, Ohio

# Dora Johnson



A formidable advocate at work and in her community

**Dora Johnson**, 74, died of pancreatic cancer June 26 at her home. In her professional life, Mrs. Johnson was a program associate at the Center for Applied Linguistics, a private, nonprofit organization that supports and encourages the teaching of less commonly taught languages, such as Pashto, Hindi, Urdu, Turkish and Arabic.

Her work included the development of learning standards and establishment of a support network for the teaching of Arabic in U.S. elementary and high schools. It was her dream, she once said, that Arabic would become "an accepted language to be taught" in the public schools of the United States.

Dora Esther Koundakjian was born Oct. 13, 1937, in Beirut. Her native language was Armenian, but she also quickly learned Arabic, Turkish, French, and English.

In 1957, she received an associate's degree at Beirut College for Women (now Lebanese American University) and then came to the United States to study linguistics. In 1960, she graduated from Transylvania University in Lexington, Ky.

In 1964, Mrs. Johnson received a master's degree in linguistics at the Hartford Seminary Foundation in Connecticut. She then came to Washington and began her career at the Center for Applied Linguistics.

At the center, she conducted and published surveys on materials and needs, developed language-learning materials and worked on literacy issues for adults whose first language was not English. She helped write survival phrase books for refugees, edited language policy papers for the U.S. Agency for International Development and participated in surveys of teaching materials for less commonly taught languages. She retired in 2009.

Survivors include two children, Martin Johnson of St. Paul, Minn., and Alicia Koundakjian of Washington, who took her mother's maiden name; a brother, Philip Koundakjian of Des Moines; and a granddaughter.

# The 59ᵗʰ Anniversary Northeast Conference Awards
## Baltimore, MD
## April 21, 2012

*2012 Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages
Annual Award for Outstanding Leadership in the Profession,
given in memory of Nelson H. Brooks*

**Richard D. Brecht** is currently the Executive Director of the Center for Advanced Study of Language at the University of Maryland, which he has led since its founding in 2003. In addition to supporting associations like NECTFL, Dr. Brecht has interacted with myriad individuals in myriad contexts — governmental, academic, professional, commercial, and cultural — to ensure mutual understanding between language teachers and those whose decisions affect their lives.

In his tribute to Richard D. Brecht, Benjamin Rifkin said that after completing his doctoral degree, Brecht held faculty positions at Cornell, Harvard, and the University of Maryland, where he has been for the past 25 years. His greatest professional impact can be seen in two intersecting aspects of his work: scholarship and leadership.

As a scholar, he is the author, co-author, editor, or co-editor of 12 books, seven reports or manuals, and author or co-author of over 50 articles or book chapters. Among his research projects in the area of the scholarship of discovery, he has edited volumes on cultural pragmatics, case in Slavic, Russian and Slavic morphosyntax; his refereed articles treat many areas, including aspectuality and semantic situational types, voice marking in Russian, form and function of aspect in Russian.

His published projects include not only contributions to textbooks, including *Russian Stage 2*, but also research articles on study abroad, including, for example, a paper co-authored with Dan Davidson and Ralph Ginsburg entitled "Predictors of Language Gain during Study Abroad." Published in 1993, it remains relevant and important today. He has also written papers and volumes spanning the fields of second language acquisition, applied linguistics, and the study of language education.

Brecht's impact has been greatest in the area of bridging the gap between theory and practice through his congressional testimony and his papers and presentations on national language capacity, national language policy, heritage language learning, the needs of the less commonly taught languages, the importance of language for national security (understood broadly), and the nature and outcomes of language study. His excellence in this area is also reflected in his extraordinary work in funded grant projects including the Center for Advanced Study of Language, LangNet (the National Language Network), EELIAS (an on-line system for the evaluation of Title VI and Fulbright-Hays programs), and many more.

Brecht has demonstrated leadership, not only in the Russian field, but in modern languages more generally. He was a founder of the American Council of Teachers of Russian (ACTR), the American Council for Collaboration in Education and Language Study (ACCELS), and the American Councils for International Education. He was also a principal founder for Project ICONS (International Communication and Negotiation Simulations), the National Foreign Language Center (NFLC), the National Council of Organizations of Less Commonly Taught Languages (which has since evolved into the National Council of Less Commonly Taught Languages), and numerous others. He has held leadership positions on boards for entities ranging from the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center and the National African Language Resource Center to the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the Joint National Committee for Languages (JNCL), and on several editorial boards. Journalists have cited him in newspapers and magazines, including *The New York Times* and *Pravda.* He has given several hundred refereed or invited scholarly and professional lectures at conferences and universities. He has also taken leadership roles in organizing conferences, including the National Language Conference in 2004 and the Heritage Language Conferences in 1999 and 2001. Brecht has participated in program reviews and consultancies working with language professionals, legislators, staff in government agencies, and leaders in the postsecondary and non-profit worlds.

He has been honored by a number of scholarly associations: the ACTR, AATSEEL, and the International Association of Teachers of Russian Language and Literature, but also Omicron Delta Kappa (the National Leadership Honor Society), NCOLCTL, the African Language Teachers Association, the National Council of Associations of Chinese Language Schools, and the National Council of Secondary Teachers of Japanese.

We honor him for his extraordinary warmth and devotion not only to his field but also to the people with whom he works to support that field. Our professional lives have been forever changed for the better thanks to Richard Brecht and the vision, drive, and passion he has shared with us in his scholarship and leadership over the span of his extraordinary career.

*2012 Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages James W. Dodge Memorial Foreign Language Advocate Award, given outside the profession in recognition of work on behalf of languages*



**Dr. J. David Edwards** is currently Executive Director of the Joint National Committee for Languages and the National Council for Languages and International Studies, representing sixty-five scholarly and professional associations concerned with languages and international education. Dr. Edwards is a past Chairman of the Council of Washington Representatives, a charter member of the American League of Lobbyists, a former

Trustee of the International Development Conference, and a founder of the English Plus Information Clearinghouse. He has served on a number of Advisory Boards, such as the National Security Education Program, the National Capitol Area Language Resource Center and the President's Leadership Council.

Prior to JNCL, Edwards worked for the Government Executive Institute training senior federal executives in legislative affairs. In fact, he designed a simulation of the hearing process that is still in use. A former Program Director for one of the nation's oldest education associations, he first came to Washington as a Research Associate for a State Department "think tank" where he produced books on Cuba, Venezuela, and Colombia.

With a Ph.D. in government and foreign affairs from the University of Virginia, Dr. Edwards has taught at Loyola University, West Virginia Tech, Trinity College, and the University of Virginia. The author of numerous books, dozens of articles and numerous keynote addresses and other speeches on international relations and national policy (his range is illustrated with merely three titles: "Lost in Translation:  A Review of the Federal Government's Efforts to Develop a Foreign Language Strategy," "The English Only Paradox," and "The Classics and Public Advocacy"), he has served as a consultant on education, human rights, and international affairs. He has been interviewed frequently by media outlets such as the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, CNN, VOA and more.

He is a recipient of the Central States Conference's Paul Simon Award and the New York Association's Presidential Award. In 1994, he received a prestigious Andrew W. Mellon Fellowship to Johns Hopkins University's Institute for Advanced Studies where he became a national authority on education reform. In 2005, Dr. Edwards was recognized for 25 years of service to the House/Senate International Education Study Group that he helped create. In 2008, he was the lead author on the definitive article on *National Language Policies:  Pragmatism, Process and Products*. In April 2011, he was awarded the A. Ronald Walton Award in recognition of distinguished service on behalf of the Less Commonly-Taught Languages.

The Northeast Conference is pleased to acknowledge Dr. Edwards' unique and brilliant work on behalf of all world language professionals. For longer than any other serving Executive Director in our field, Dave Edwards has made tangible his undying commitment to ensure that all Americans know and can use their native language and at least one other. The full implications of this mission are far more complex than most people realize. They have required that Dave demonstrate expertise in the areas of politics, economics, education, sociology, government, the military, diplomacy, non-profit management, history, culture, and language. They have required that he deploy skills in the interpersonal, presentational, and interpretive realms as he engages with a broad range of constituents. They have required that he hone his natural dispositions toward intellectual curiosity, broad-mindedness, a passion for civil rights and access, the refusal to judge.

In conferring the Dodge Award on J. David Edwards, NECTFL notes the number of previous recipients whose advocacy we came to know thanks to the work, the acumen

and the loyalty Dave has shown us for 30 years, including Leon Panetta, Christopher Dodd, Claiborne Pell, David Boren, Richard Riley, Ann Copland, and Rush Holt. Our debt could not be greater, and we thank Dave and congratulate him warmly on his selection.

In her tribute to J. David Edwards, Jayne Abrate, Executive Director of AATF and former President of JNCL/NCLIS, said, "How ironic that the biggest champion of the study of languages is monolingual, but perhaps that is as it should be. Since he has no personal allegiance to any one language, he has supported us all with equal enthusiasm." Abrate pointed out that, as Edwards has repeatedly reminded us, languages are a bi-partisan issue. Despite the fact that languages are often given short shrift, he had a personal hand in and guided us through the legislative process that resulted in the Centers for International Business Education and Research (CIBERs), the Foreign Language Assistance Program (FLAP), the National Security Education Program (NSEP), and the National Foreign Language Resource Centers (NFLRCs). This is a remarkable achievement in a business where even one significant piece of legislation in a career is more the norm. Furthermore, this does not take into account all the smaller, but no less important, successes such as changes to wording in legislation from language to languages or in referencing a list of "critical languages" that is nearly all inclusive.

He taught us as a profession that there is a difference between advocacy and public relations and how to lobby effectively, knowledge that delegates carried back to their states and implemented successfully in local legislative efforts. He has always told us that "we are the experts," but Dave is the legislative expert who made us effective advocates of our professional expertise.

For 32 years, Edwards has managed to corral a diverse and sometimes cantankerous language profession, with its individual interests and potentially conflicting priorities. He has led us to build consensus around attainable goals that have greatly enriched the field. In order to be our voice, he has listened, questioned, digested, and reflected our views in a way that sharpened and unified our goals. His stewardship of JNCL-NCLIS has been wholehearted, farsighted, and yet realistic. Dave has never been interested in doing anything just for show. He has focused on getting results, and his record speaks for itself.

*2012 Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages Teacher of the Year*



Lucy Lee has been such an unstintingly generous contributor to the Northeast Conference — presenting workshops and sessions, encouraging others to attend, helping to attract exhibitors, sharing ideas and responding to requests for advice, and always being available while maintaining a profile of humility and a demeanor of optimism and good cheer. NECTFL Board and staff members cannot imagine a Northeast Conference without her, and given all she does for our profession, it is incredible to come to know her also as a teacher worthy of representing our entire profession!

It is our pleasure and our great honor to have Lucy Chu Lee serve as the face of NECTFL in our profession for the coming year and to move forward to the national level at the upcoming 2012 ACTFL convention in Philadelphia with the other four regional associations' Teachers of the Year.

We share this honor with the colleagues and associations who nominated her with praise, gratitude, and awe:

> "… her name is practically synonymous with CLASS…" (and she is a "class act"!)
> "She is the example of what a dedicated world language educator should be. When one interacts with Lucy, her kindness and humility are such it would be impossible to guess what a prominent national figure she is."
> "A consummate professional, Lucy is a master teacher in the classroom, a respected educational leader in the Livingston community and a strong advocate for Chinese language education nationally and internationally."
> "The unique quality that Mrs. Lee brings to every aspect of her teaching profession is her ability to connect with her students."
> "I cannot say on how many occasions my colleagues in other states have said to me 'You are so lucky to have Lucy Lee in your state!' This is true."
> "I wish when I had done my student teaching years ago that I had had such a conscientious and forward-thinking advisor."
> "A teacher is just someone that instructs a student. Mrs. Lee was a mentor, friend, scholar, and teacher all in one."
> "Even after all these years, Mrs. Lee remains the most influential academic figure in my life. As I head to London to pursue my Master's in International Relations … I know that the work ethic, passion for knowledge, and interest in the world at large was largely due to the influence of my high school Chinese teacher. Mrs. Lee doesn't just deserve this one award; she should be the teacher that all future nominees of the award are judged by."

Lucy Chu Lee is a veteran Chinese language teacher for 23 years at Livingston High School in New Jersey. She presently is also a teacher educator at Rutgers University and William Paterson University, and has taught at Seton Hall University and Drew University. She served as a teacher trainer for the Wisconsin Critical Language Fellows Project, was a member of the US Department of Education's Teacher-to-Teacher Training Corps, and continues to provide training for the Guest Teachers Summer Institute sponsored by the College Board and UCLA. Ms. Lee has a B.A. degree in English literature from Soochow University in China. She then came to the United States to complete a Master's Degree in Early Childhood Special Education at the University of Texas in Austin. She continued her education at Seton Hall University where she earned an Ed.S. as an education specialist in bilingual education.

Over the years, Ms. Lee has played an influential role in the growth of Chinese language education in the United States. She served two terms as president of the Chinese Language Association of Secondary-Elementary Schools (CLASS) and served on the Board of Directors for the Chinese Language Teachers Association (CLTA). She led the

CLASS Fulbright Summer Study Abroad Programs in China as the Project Director in both 2002 and 2004. Ms. Lee has also been an assessment specialist for the College Board SAT II Chinese Test and is presently an AP consultant for the AP Chinese test. She has served on a variety of professional committees including the National Standards for Foreign Language Collaborative Project, AAPPL Leadership Team and Advisory Committee, ACTFL Assessment Grant Advisory Committee, SOPA Online Training Panel committee, and the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) WOPA-C Course Project.

Ms. Lee is very active in the foreign language profession; she has presented many workshops for national, regional and state conferences. As an executive board member of the Foreign Language Educators of New Jersey (FLENJ) since 2000, she has worked to promote the teaching and learning of world languages through the student podcast contest. Ms. Lee served two years on the National Commission for the AP World Languages Course and Exam Review Project. She was appointed to serve on the New Jersey International Education Taskforce and served three years on the National Chinese Language Commission for a Luce Foundation Project on the Chinese Language Field Initiative. Ms. Lee is a past board member of the National Council of Organizations of the Less Commonly Taught Languages (NCOLCTL).

Ms. Lee was also an essential part of the writing team for the K-4 Chinese curriculum funded by the Ohio State Department of Education's critical language FLAP grant. She co-chaired the Chinese National Standards Project in 1996-1998, participated in the NEH/Ohio State NFLRC-funded Guide for Basic Chinese Language Programs in 1999, and co-authored the *CLASS Professional Standards for K-12 Chinese Language Teachers* in 2007.

Ms. Lee's experience is truly international. Before moving to the US in 1984, she taught for three years at an international pre-school in Hong Kong. She continues to assist in overseas programs for Chinese teachers and has worked with the Beijing Language and Culture University and Hanban in providing courses for teachers. Ms. Lee has received many honors and awards including the FLENJ Professional Award, CLASS Professional Service Award, and A+ For Kids Teacher Award. Ms. Lee is honored to be recognized as the 2012 NECTFL Teacher of the Year. She dedicates this award to all of the other hard-working language teachers in the NECTFL family.

The Northeast Conference also congratulated and honored Jodie Hogan, the Maryland Foreign Language Association Teacher of the Year, and Donna Spangler, the Pennsylvania State Modern Language Association Teacher of the Year, for their outstanding performance as NECTFL Teacher of the Year Finalists!

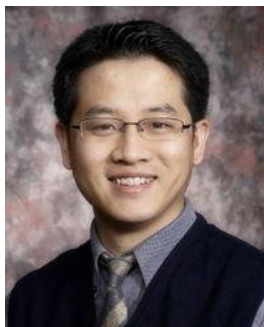# 2012 SANS, Inc. / Mead Leadership Fellows

**Christopher Gwin**
Foreign Language
Educators of New Jersey
German
Haddonfield Memorial
High School
Rutgers University,
Camden

**Nicole Sherf**
Massachusetts Foreign
Language Association
Spanish
Salem State College

**Joseph Ventosa**
Maryland Foreign
Language Association
Spanish
Marriotts Ridge High
School

**Daliang Wang**
Pennsylvania State
Modern Language
Association
Chinese
Mercyhurst College

### NECTFL Mailing List Available to Foreign Language Educators

Our mailing list of 14,000 names throughout the region and the country represents the most active, dynamic, and professional educators in the field. These are the inviduals who seek out opportunities for continued growth in their teaching, administration, research, and personal knowledge. The mailing list is available for purchase to those with a demonstrated interest in and commitment to foreign language education. It will not be sold to anyone outside the field. If you wish to present information about your program, district, or materials, please contact us at 717-245-1977 or at **nectfl@dickinson.edu** for further information.

# IMPORTANT!
## How to contact
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