

# **NECTFL** ***REVIEW***

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



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

Number 68

September 2011

# NORTHEAST CONFERENCE

on the Teaching of Foreign Languages



Held jointly with the Maryland Foreign Language Association  
59th Annual Conference: Friday, April 20 – Monday, April 23, 2012  
Baltimore Marriott Waterfront Hotel



## Global Identities

Jennie Steeley, Manheim Township (PA) Middle School, Chair



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## *From the 2012 Chair*

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Dear Colleagues and Friends,

My name is Jennie Steeley, and I am a middle school French teacher in the Manheim Township School District near Lancaster PA. It is my privilege and honor to serve as the 2011-2012 chair of the Northeast Conference.

Our conference will take place at the beautiful Marriott Waterfront in the charming, accessible, slightly offbeat, and very world language-friendly city of Baltimore from April 20-23, 2012. The conference theme is GLOBAL IDENTITIES. This theme is based on a set of beliefs that Northeast

Conference leaders have been articulating since 1954. In that year, a Working Committee led by Stephen A. Freeman, wrote:

When it is properly taught, the result of foreign language study can be widened personal horizons, tolerance toward national and racial differences, and better international understanding. Language skills, like all practical skills, may never be perfected, and may be later forgotten, yet the enlarging and enriching results of the cultural experience endure throughout life.

The committee's point was that the acquisition of linguistic and cultural proficiency effects a durable change in who we are. That is what makes us remarkable. And for learners (and no one ever stops being a learner in this profession!), the most meaningful part of that change is that it opens windows on someone else's reality and opens doors to encounters with others. That is what makes us love our work.

World languages should be an indispensable part of every child's education. Yet the recent Center for Applied Linguistics survey reports a drop in the number of elementary school WL programs in the U.S. over the past decade. And too many of us are experiencing cutbacks of many different kinds as budgets tighten. At the same time, every educational institution and political leader seems to be calling for a "global curriculum" or for "internationalizing" education.

To combat the apathy, antagonism, and hypocrisy, and to maintain our own morale and self-respect, we need professional experiences that develop every aspect of our global identities:

- our identities as speakers of other languages and participants in other cultures;
- our identities as professionals and colleagues;
- our identities as citizens of local, regional, national, and international communities;
- our identities as teachers in classrooms full of learners.

Each day of the conference will highlight one of the above identities to provide you with a wealth of diverse and exciting opportunities to learn, connect, share, and grow. The conference will be as beneficial as a trip to the spa, with the intellectual equivalents of being pampered, stretching out, getting a massage, relaxing in a warm pool, plunging into cold water, and more!

As you return to work this fall, make sure to include participation in the 2012 Northeast Conference as part of your plans. Information and online forms will be available at [www.nectfl.org](http://www.nectfl.org). You are welcome to contact me at [nectfl@dickinson.edu](mailto:nectfl@dickinson.edu). I wish you a successful and happy school year and look forward to welcoming you to Baltimore next April!

Cordially,

Jennie Steeley  
2012 Northeast Conference Chair



## *From the Managing Editor*

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Readers,

We are now online with the third electronic-format issue of the *NECTFL Review*. We continue to offer you the same quality of articles and information that you have appreciated in our print version of the journal. You can now read them online or download the entire publication in PDF format. In addition, the electronic format allows us to offer you features such as the integration of color and active links to both websites mentioned and e-mail addresses. These links are in blue; simply click on a link and you will be taken to the site mentioned, or your e-mail program will open with the address of the recipient of your message already in place.

Visit the [NECTFL website](#) by just clicking and see what the organization is about and what it is doing. Send me an [e-mail](#) and let me know what you think of the format, the articles, the reviews...whatever you would like for me to know and whatever you might want to see changed.

In this issue, we offer you four outstanding articles covering a broad range of topics. Benjamin Rifkin takes us on “Language learning journeys and destinations” and asks us “Are we there yet?” Professor Rifkin reviews the state of foreign language learning outcomes in post-secondary education, considering research on learning outcomes conducted over the past 40 years, examining the shifting nature of the population of foreign language learners, enrollment patterns, the design of the foreign language curriculum, and the teaching and learning dynamic in the era of Facebook, with special focus on the post-secondary context. He tells post-secondary educators to take a long hard look at the structure of their curricula, the way that they are (or are not) articulated with earlier foreign language programs, and at how we establish learning outcomes goals, teach toward them, and assess and document our students’ foreign language successes.

Sheri Spaine Long asks us another question: “How and why did the Spanish curriculum get supersized? And how can we fix it?” Long examines the state of the introductory Spanish curriculum from a teacher’s perspective and discusses the cultural, professional, and societal forces that have expanded it. She points out that the introductory Spanish curriculum is overloaded and has been “supersized” over the last few decades, and she advocates reducing to the curriculum with an eye to pruning this level’s introductory Spanish grammar canon in particular.

In the third article, “Motivation, race, and foreign language instruction: The need for culturally responsive teaching,” professors Scott Kissau, Lan Quach Kolano, and Chuang Wang, present their research on the motivation of young Black students to learn Spanish at one large inner-city high school in the US. These researchers investigated differences in motivational factors among racial groups at a diverse high school. They found that Black students are no less motivated to study Spanish than their peers, but they also found that a perceived lack of cultural relevance among some Black students may jeopardize their motivation to pursue learning a language. The authors suggest that world language teachers adopt a more culturally responsive approach to teaching languages to engage all students in language learning.

The fourth article in this September issue, written by Douglas W. Mast, narrows our focus down to “Using semantic maps and word families in the beginning-level

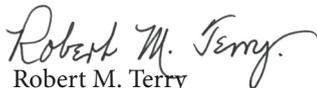
middle school foreign language classroom.” In this article, Mast points out the importance of vocabulary learning strategies. He describes several methods for making vocabulary learning more effective for young adolescents during the early stages of foreign language study. Although he focuses on the middle school language learner, his suggestions are equally as applicable to elementary school and high school and college learners at the beginning level.

Although three of the four articles in this issue are based on the study of Spanish, it is patently clear that the comments and suggestions made are applicable to all languages that are taught at all levels.

Finally, the NECTFL *Review* continues to offer you the wide range of reviews of textbooks, media-based programs, movies, software, and other materials of interest to foreign language teachers. In this issue, you will find reviews of 15 different books and learning materials.

Remember, next year’s NECTFL annual meeting will again be held in Baltimore, MD, at the Baltimore Marriott Waterfront Hotel on April 21–23, 2012. Please read the letter on pages 4–5 from the Chair of the 2012 Conference, Jennie Steeley.

Cordially,

  
Robert M. Terry  
Managing Editor

## Guidelines for the 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 the field of teacher recruitment and retention and the originality of that contribution; the soundness of the research or theoretical base, its implications; 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 follow only the most recent APA [American Psychological Association] Guidelines. Please use the latest edition (6th ed., 2010) of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* as your guide. Most 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 Documentation Guide: <http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/DocAPA.html> — This is another excellent site based on the 6th edition of the APA guidelines.
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  - f. APA Reference Style Guide: [http://library.nmu.edu/guides/userguides/style\\_apa.htm](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](mailto:rterry@richmond.edu) Please follow these guidelines carefully to expedite the review and publishing process:
  - a. Use a PC- or Mac-compatible word-processing program, preferably Microsoft Word 2007 or a later version. 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 only when necessary; 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.
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:
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    - ii. Names and titles of the author(s)
    - iii. Preferred mailing addresses
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    - vii. For joint authorship, indicate 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 and refer to studies or projects at “X Middle School” or “X University.”
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7. Include a short biographical paragraph (this will appear at the bottom of the first page of the article). Please include this paragraph on a separate page at the end of your 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
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  - 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 length of manuscripts averages approximately 20-25 double-spaced pages, including notes, charts, and references. This does not mean that a slightly longer or shorter 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 following 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.

## A Checklist for Manuscript Preparation

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

1. “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.
  - a. Any portions of text in a foreign language must be followed immediately by an English translation in square brackets.
  - b. 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.
2. Remember that with the APA guidelines, notes (footnotes or endnotes) are discouraged—such information is considered to be either important enough to be included in the article itself or not significant enough to be placed anywhere. If notes are necessary, however, they should be endnotes.
  - a. 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 we prepare an article for eventual publication.
  - b. Do not use automatic page numbering; such numbering is often difficult to remove from a manuscript and must be removed before the article is prepared for eventual publication.
3. Please double-space everything in your manuscript.
4. Use left justification only; do not use full justification anywhere in the article.
5. The required font throughout is either Times New Roman 12 pt. or Minion Pro 12 pt.
6. There should be only one space after each period, according to APA format.
7. 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).
  - a. In listing items or in a series of words connected by and, but, or or, use a comma before the conjunction.
  - b. When providing a list of items, use double parentheses surrounding the numbers or letters: (1), (2), or (3) or (a), (b), and (c).
8. All numbers above “nine” must appear as Arabic numerals [“nine school districts” vs. “10 textbooks”]; numbers below 10 must be written out.
9. 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.
10. Use standard postal abbreviations for states in all reference items [e.g., NC, IL, NY, MS], but not in the text itself.
11. 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 inch.
12. 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.

13. 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.
14. 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.
15. 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.
16. 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"x 11" manuscript page will not usually fit on our journal pages.
17. Please make certain that the components you submit are in the following order:
  - a. 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;
  - b. First page of the manuscript—containing the title of the article and the abstract
  - c. The text of the article
  - d. Notes; References, Appendices—in this order
  - e. The short, biographical paragraph (no more than 4-5 lines).

Robert M. Terry  
Articles Editor and Managing Editor  
NECTFL *Review*  
[rterry@richmond.edu](mailto:rterry@richmond.edu)

## 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

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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 you!

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## Language learning journeys and destinations: Are we there yet?<sup>1</sup>

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Benjamin Rifkin, *The College of New Jersey*

### Abstract

This paper reviews the state of foreign language learning outcomes in post-secondary education, considering research on learning outcomes conducted over the past 40 years, examining the shifting nature of the population of foreign language learners, enrollment patterns, the design of the foreign language curriculum, and the teaching and learning dynamic in the era of Facebook, with special focus on the post-secondary context. I argue that foreign language educators at the post-secondary level should take a long hard look at the structure of our curricula, the way they are articulated (or not) with secondary and elementary foreign language programs, and the way in which we establish learning outcomes goals, teach toward them, and assess and document our students' foreign language successes. These measures will help the foreign languages field reposition itself at the center of the American college liberal arts education.

### Introduction

When I was a small child, my family would periodically undertake what was to me an epic journey from the suburbs of New York City to a community on the Jersey shore, not far from Atlantic City, to visit with relatives. Of course, as a small child in the back seat of a car on what seemed like an interminable trip, I would ask periodically,

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**Benjamin Rifkin** (Ph.D., University of Michigan, Ann Arbor) is Professor of Modern Languages (Russian) and Dean of the School of Culture and Society at the College of New Jersey. He has taught Russian language courses at the first- through fifth-year college levels, served as director of the Russian language program at the University of Wisconsin-Madison for fifteen years and as director of the Middlebury Russian School for four years. His research interests lie in applied linguistics, second language acquisition, and foreign language education. An ACTFL-Certified Oral Proficiency Interview Trainer in Russian, Rifkin has published articles in *Foreign Language Annals*, *Modern Language Journal*, and *Slavic and East European Journal*, as well as several book chapters, two edited volumes, and two textbooks for Russian.

“Are we there yet?” My mother would calmly respond that we still had so many hours or minutes to go before arriving. As I grew, with each passing year I came to recognize more and more milestones on the journey, measuring our family’s progress on the trip there and back: the never-ending toll booths, certain signs on the highway, and our exit on the Garden State Parkway.

The question “Are we there yet?” lingers in my mind to this day. The question consists almost entirely of deictic expressions clear only from context. But the trip, made twice annually, had a clear context shared by all its participants:

- “We” are the family members in the same car;
- “There” is the home of my Aunt Janet, a destination clearly marked on the map at the end of a well-marked road;
- “Yet” refers to the time already traveled in the context of the larger expectation of a 3-hour trip that could be made somewhat longer by traffic; and
- “Are” is a referent to the commonly shared understanding of the mode of travel, the automobile in which we were moving at a rate of 50 miles per hour.

Transposing this question to the study of foreign languages in American institutions of higher education we confront the problem that the answer to the question of our destination is often unclear for most of the participants in the process.

**There**

*I begin my analysis of language learning journeys and destinations with an*  


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examination of the concept of *there*, the intended destination of the language learning journey. Unfortunately, despite important and significant work on this issue in ACTFL and the AATs, as evidenced by both the proficiency guidelines and national standards for foreign language learning (National Standards Collaborative, 2006) — documents that should be the envy of many other academic disciplines — there is still no consensus on the goal(s) of foreign language learning. Are we as teachers working with students so that they can acquire flawless pronunciation and pass for native speakers? Are we teaching the next generation of Cervantes and Baudelaire scholars? Is our primary focus to help our students understand the difference between *ser* and *estar*? Or to help our students understand what this difference means for a native speaker of Spanish? Are we teaching our students to behave in culturally appropriate ways in Dakar? Are we

teaching them to be more sensitive to the linguistic and cultural diversity of the United States, a civic goal in alignment with the larger purposes of the liberal arts education in which we, the foreign language profession, participate? Are we teaching our students to interact and communicate with speakers of other languages, both in the United States and abroad, both in person and in technology-mediated contexts? These are but a few

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of the questions we have not answered, not only in our profession, but also in our programs, departments, and colleges.

Indeed, looking at the titles of articles in our professional journals and the presentations at our professional association conferences, it is clear that debates on the balance of fluency and accuracy, grammar and culture, speaking and writing, listening and reading, group work and whole class activities continue to take up much of our time and attention. Debates on these topics sometimes omit the impressions of our learners, who may have unrealistic expectations about their learning outcomes and whose goals and motivations for studying a language may be very different from ours. For instance, “my girlfriend’s parents don’t speak English, so I want to learn their language” [implication: only as long as our relationship continues to be viable] or “this class fits in my schedule and I need 3 more credits,” or even “my boyfriend is taking this class and I want to take the same class as he does.” Then there is the student who wants to use German in her future job as a neurosurgeon. In short, teachers and learners in the foreign languages learning/teaching dynamic often lack a shared understanding of the meaning of *there*.

*There*, indeed, is a complicated concept for us also because we often do not have consensus about program goals within each of our programs. Unlike many other academic disciplines, the foreign language profession has widely accepted documents constituting a developmental framework for learning and teaching from pre-school through the attainment of language proficiency that typically occurs only after the completion of the bachelor’s degree (e.g., superior and distinguished level skills): the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines, the national standards for foreign language learning, and the *Performance Guidelines for K-12 Learners*. Yet foreign language faculty within the very same program often work at cross-purposes with one another while students in that program move from one course to another without progressing in what should constitute a curriculum, an intentionally sequenced series of learning events. For example, some programs use a communicative textbook in the first year, a grammar-translation textbook in the second year, provide a conversation-focused course in the third year, and a literature-focused class in the fourth year. This is not a curriculum, but a collection of courses arranged in a sequence like hurdles on a track. Indeed, the design and placement of the hurdles in each section of the track seems to be left in the hands of discrete and isolated groups of people (graduate student teaching assistants, lecturers, tenure-stream faculty), each of which is responsible only for one section of the track, as discussed by Byrnes (2001), Swaffar (2006), and in the MLA Ad-Hoc Committee’s Report on Foreign Language Education (2007).

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The disconnect within foreign language programs in higher education has many sources. Unlike the K-12 sector, we do not have mandated standards or curricular outcomes we must achieve in accordance with state law. Of course, as a profession we are all too well informed that in many cases the mandated curricular standards and

achievement benchmarks imposed in the K-12 sector have not had the desired effects. Each of us in higher education teaches by virtue of a kind of license, a combination of a degree and our proficiency in the target language, proficiency that in some cases is assumed, rather than documented. (Not all graduate programs in the foreign languages test their graduate students in the target language and/or require certain levels of language performance as a degree requirement.) Throughout higher education, there is an implicit understanding that teachers have autonomy to teach as they see fit; this is the premise of academic freedom. If I want students in my second-year course to have a solid understanding of ballet and dedicate numerous class hours to watching ballet in class, not discussing, but watching it, it may be difficult for the instructor of the third-year class to move forward on a syllabus that focuses on anything but ballet. We often draw up our course plans without consultation with those who teach our students in the previous course in the sequence or in the course that follows ours. Many of us may not consistently or consciously link course plans or lesson plans to curricular or programmatic goals, let alone to the goals of a liberal arts education or our institution's mission. Few graduate programs model collaborative approaches to curricular planning (from the beginning of the first-semester course to the final examination in the capstone course in the fourth-year class), so graduate students have little opportunity to participate in such a collaborative curricular planning process. In

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short, there is little understanding of the goals of language learning, or, in the words of Gertrude Stein, there is no **there** there.

Unfortunately, the situation is even more complicated. In many institutions, there are no assessment practices in place in order to determine where we arrive at the end of one, two, three, or four years of instruction. Where there are assessment procedures, these are not necessarily informed by collaborative articulation of programmatic learning objectives. In other words, if we did indeed get “there” at the end of a program of instruction, how would we know it? Imagine my family driving aimlessly on the Garden State Parkway, perhaps tragically driving off into the Atlantic Ocean, because we had no clearly marked map, no global positioning system (GPS) device reminding us when to turn left, or that we will arrive at our destination in 250 feet. Without data on the performance of student cohorts at certain milestone points in the curriculum, it is impossible to know where **there**

is and how close we are to **there**. All we know for sure is that our students graduate after four years. This is not so much an arrival at a destination, as it is running out of time for the journey. To return to my original metaphor, imagine, if you will, that my family set out on the Garden State Parkway to get to the Jersey Shore, got as far as New Brunswick, not quite 50% of the intended journey, and gave up because we had run out of time. Indeed, some programs in the K-12 sector that are losing state funding are replacing live classroom teachers with software programs (for example, Rundquist, 2010). Without assessment data, faculty and administration in those programs have

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no evidence to prove that student use of software three to five hours a week without classroom instruction yields language learning results comparable to those obtained in the same number of hours working with a classroom teacher. Furthermore, as Schulz (2006, p. 255) has argued, without a clear articulation of our goals and assessment to document whether they have been attained, we are unlikely to be working with students who will take our goals, or our foreign language program, seriously.

Language learning journeys are each different, given the nature of the learner, the teacher, the language being studied, and the environment in which it is taught. Indeed, given the challenges of teaching orthography in Arabic or Chinese, let alone the pragmatics of cultures that are very different from those in North American speech communities, language learners and teachers working in Arabic or Chinese clearly need a sustained sequence of carefully planned learning opportunities and experiences. The question of time compels us as language teaching professionals to consider the most important question of curricular planning: what do we want our students to be able to do with their language skills when they complete a major or minor in a foreign language given that the time we have with our students is finite? In the nineteenth century and much of the twentieth century, the answer was clear: our students must be prepared to read the great works of the Latin or Greek literary canons in the original. The study of modern languages began to muddy those clear waters; the rise of behaviorism led many in the foreign language field to emphasize transactional oral/aural skills, reducing, in some cases, the importance of literacy skills. Recent research in this area (e.g., Brecht, Davidson, and Ginsberg, 1993 for Russian; Magnan, 1986 for French; and Tschirner, 1996 for German) suggest modest outcomes for foreign language learning at the college level, with students typically attaining only Intermediate-level proficiency after four years of classroom instruction if they do not participate in a study abroad or domestic immersion experience.

What is it, then, that we want foreign language students to be able to accomplish in the time they have in our classroom? How will we spend our precious time with them? This is the crux of curricular planning. It requires careful consideration of the perspectives of all participants in the learning/teaching dynamic including students and instructors at all levels, as well as prospective employers and alumni. The best foreign language programs in the world are those with explicitly articulated and shared goals. The development of such goals is not an easy or quick project: it requires careful reflection and discussion involving all the stakeholders in the learning-teaching dynamic, as recommended by many scholars, including Steinhart (2006) and this writer (Rifkin, 2006). From the articulation of goals comes the development of resource plans and staffing allocation as well as the development of assessment instruments to monitor the achievement of those goals. If the foreign language enterprise is worth our life energy, then it is worth planning, in the sense of a collaborative effort of all those invested in the process.

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In the world outside our classrooms, we all commonly review performance in accordance with clearly established criteria. For instance, if I did not like the way those apples tasted, I will buy different ones the next time I am at the store. We similarly invest

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significant energy, effort, and resources in our teaching; yet as a profession, we often do not regularly assess the performance of our *programs*, in the context of learning outcomes, in a comprehensive and systematic way, outside of the NCATE accreditation process. Indeed, institutionally based program reviews often consider a broad range of benchmarks, such as enrollment data, scholarly productivity of the faculty, placement outcomes (graduates with jobs or placed in graduate or professional programs), but they less frequently include data on learning outcomes in the post-secondary context as evidenced by the relative paucity of learning outcomes studies in many language fields. The similar lack of data on

learning outcomes posted to departmental websites (e.g., “evidence of our success”) is typical of post-secondary education more broadly, as discussed in a June 2010 report issued by the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (Jankowski and Makela, 2010). Indeed, stories about incoming college freshmen who had studied a language for four years in high school being placed into the first- or second-semester language course in college are legion. These stories also suggest a lack of consensus about the goals of language learning, in this case, lack of consensus among high school teachers and college faculty. If students are repeating classes, we need to understand why. A pattern of repeated classes has implications for the allocation of budgetary and personnel resources. Furthermore, this pattern sends a message to students and parents that the secondary school foreign language programs are not successful and therefore may well be eliminated or reduced in the next budgetary crisis.

Indeed, foreign language professionals at all levels must communicate with one another and with our students about our and their expectations of and aspirations for student learning, especially in the context of reduced budgets and financial constraints. Then we can begin to monitor whether our curricula actually promote the objectives we pursue. Discrepancies between our stated goals and students’ actual performance may suggest either that we should pursue other goals or that we need to change some aspect(s) of our work with the students. In either case, we need data to be able to make informed decisions. If we do not ask the questions, collect and analyze data, consider conclusions drawn from our analysis of the data, we will not be able to construct a map, let alone follow one, that will show us how to get from “here” to “there.”

## Yet

The temporal adverb **yet** in our touchstone question, “Are we there **yet**?” is the source of many problems in curricular design for foreign languages. It implies arrival at a destination within a certain anticipated period of time. In my childhood journeys to my aunt’s house, my family did, indeed, share a common sense of that period of time: three hours, plus or minus, given the traffic. Our students have different goals for language learning and each of them is associated with different time frames for

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achievement. Some students want to complete a college's foreign language requirement; that is easily timed in requirements based on "seat time," the completion of a certain number of semester hours in formal classroom instruction, regardless of the outcome. Some students want to be able to learn something about their ethnic roots; does that take one, two, three, four years or more? It is even harder to describe the attainment of fluency or adequate preparation for matriculation into a graduate program. What does it mean to complete a major in the language and culture? Indeed, many students have unrealistic beliefs about the attainment of fluency and these beliefs vary by language studied (Rifkin, 2000).

The fact that American students have unrealistic expectations about foreign language learning is not surprising. American culture is permeated by evidence supporting the idea that languages can be easily "picked up." Characters in films and television programs suddenly reveal expertise in a language necessary to solve a crime; these characters' biographies rarely provide any indication of hours and months of hard work acquiring the language. The seat back pocket in front of you in the airplane may be too small for you to slide your water bottle into it, but it is big enough to carry an in-flight magazine with advertisements for CD-ROMs for sale, technology that will help you speak Spanish like a diplomat. The idea behind these CD-ROMs is absurd: you can just passively listen to some random audio files and "pick up" the language you need without dedicating effort to do so.

The current economic challenges in higher education present the foreign language field with a dilemma. Just as we are losing faculty lines and in some cases, language programs, we are at the same time in an expansion mode with more students of more languages (e.g., Arabic, Chinese, Hebrew, Hindi, Italian, Korean, Portuguese, Urdu, to name just a few), and more kinds of language courses (including heritage language courses and courses on language for special purposes), as well as a host of new kinds of learning materials, than might have been observed 20 years ago. However, we still have only four years in a bachelor's degree program and only some of that time can be dedicated to foreign language study in the context of the American liberal arts curriculum. Indeed, one can imagine a giant countdown timer looming over the campus that is set every fall semester with the arrival of the new cohort of freshmen. Some of them have had high school language experience they can build on in the post-secondary curriculum, while others are heritage speakers of the language they are studying. Still more know a language closely related to the one they are studying. Of course, a large number of students have no relevant previous experience in their target language; these are the "true beginners." We can take them only as far as we can take them in the time we share with them. The United States Department of State and the Defense Language Institute (DLI) have studied data on language acquisition and have classified world languages by difficulty for native speakers of English with no knowledge of a language related to their target language. As reported by Omaggio-Hadley (2001) and Jackson and Kaplan (2001), scholars working in the United States Defense Language Institute have divided world languages into four difficulty categories for North American learners who are native speakers of English:

- Category 1: Romance languages, Swahili, Dutch, Scandinavian languages
- Category 2: German, Indonesian, Hindi, Hebrew, Bulgarian
- Category 3: Russian, Czech, Yoruba, Thai
- Category 4: Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Korean.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, according to US government estimates, it takes only 300-some odd hours to attain a certain level of fluency (see Omaggio-Hadley above, and Jackson and Kaplan, 2001) in a category 1 language, but over 700 hours in a category 3 language and over 1100 hours in a group 4 language. These findings were confirmed for French by Magnan (1986), for German by Tschirner (1996), and for Russian by Brecht, Davidson, and Ginsberg (1993), Thompson (1996), and Rifkin (2005). The data create a tableau that makes very clear to all foreign language professionals the importance of study abroad for our students because the data prove that immersion is the only way for foreign language students to attain proficiency above the intermediate level.<sup>3</sup>

## We

Returning for a moment to my touchstone question, “Are we there yet?” it is time to turn to the question of who are **we**. On the face of it, **we** should be clear in our foreign language metaphor: it is our students. But our students today are more diverse than ever before. They come to the foreign language enterprise with as diverse a range of motivations as their skin tones, their socio-economic backgrounds, their language learning backgrounds, their expectations of the language learning experience, their learning styles and preferences, and their language learning aptitudes. **We** also includes us, the teachers, with the full range of our teaching interests, styles, and passions.

Who are our students? Who are our potential students? At some universities faculty and staff have begun asking incoming freshmen what languages they speak or spoke in their homes and have learned that many of our freshmen speak or spoke a language other than English in their homes. This impression is also confirmed by the MLA Language Map of the United States (2010), which shows the diversity of languages spoken in homes throughout the country. The situation varies all over North America, but in addition to Spanish, we have many students who speak a dialect of Chinese, a South Asian language, Hmong, Korean, Russian, or Ukrainian, or a language of West Africa. These data suggest that we should be considering heritage language programming not only in Spanish, but in some of these other languages as well.

Brecht, Caemmerer, and Walton (1995, p. 72-73) defined four different missions for language teaching: the liberal arts mission (students who want to broaden their understanding of the world and its cultures), the ethnic heritage mission (students who want to learn more about their roots, whether close or distant), the instrumental or applied mission (students who want to use the language in non-teaching positions in the workforce), and the specialist mission (students who want to join the professoriate and become the next generation of professors teaching the given foreign language). Our students, themselves, subscribe to different missions. In joining our students in the classroom, are we able to join them as “we” with a shared sense of mission? Have we designed our curriculum in order

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*Indeed, can one unified curriculum serve the needs of students with different language learning missions?*

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to address the needs of only one of these missions, but not the others? Indeed, can one unified curriculum serve the needs of students with different language learning missions? Elsewhere (Rifkin, in press) I have written about the discrepancy between the missions to which our students subscribe and the curricula in which they are enrolled, comparing data from a survey of nearly 900 students of different languages at several different institutions with the design of foreign language majors at over 30 colleges and universities.

Indeed, teachers are part of the “we” as well and teachers’ sense of mission and purpose must be considered in the articulation of learning goals. To that end, instructors must collaborate with one another and other stakeholders on key issues of program design. This is very difficult, of course, because in many programs, part-time instructors or graduate student teaching assistants are hired and deployed without much mentoring; in other programs, beginning faculty members without substantial training are hired into tenure-track positions. In still other programs, some senior faculty members, with tenure, do not keep up with the latest research on foreign language education. Do all these instructors share the same beliefs as those who hold the doctoral degree? Do those different groups of instructors meet to discuss their beliefs and their sense of purpose within the larger foreign language program? Can we be certain that the instruction provided by any of these groups helps students to move forward toward the elusive **there** especially if **there** has not been clearly defined and may, in fact, be three or more different language learning destinations for each of these groups of instructors? As teachers we must be conscious of the **we** of this formula. We must consider our teaching in the most careful way, considering our students, their learning needs and learning styles, our program’s goals, the latest research in applied linguistics and second language acquisition, the availability of technology and its suitability to attaining learning goals, the needs and concerns of our teaching colleagues, and other factors. We must also be ready to observe and evaluate teaching performance on a number of different criteria, to mentor beginning teachers to achieve their full potential as instructors, to engage more senior faculty in considering new approaches to teaching, and to be inspired from the observation of good teaching from instructors at any stage of their career. In this regard, we must be careful not to impose our own teaching styles on other teachers, but to encourage them to discover how to be the best teachers they can be. Programs should establish systems for mentoring beginning teachers, encouraging them to visit the classes of other instructors who are identified as successful classroom practitioners, not only the observation of junior faculty by senior faculty. Clearly articulated mentoring programs should help all instructors develop their own pedagogical approach(es) and strategies for attaining them.

## Are

The first word of our cornerstone phrase, “Are we there yet?” is the verb, “**are**,” the last word to be analyzed in this discussion. In the journey to the Jersey shore, that verb stands in for the process of driving in a private automobile at a speed of about 50 miles per hour. What is expected of learners and teachers with regard to the processes of learning and teaching? Many students may have the expectation that the outcomes of learning can be attained without effort merely by using new technologies. For instance,

“if I listen to the dialogues on my iPod twice a day while I am tired and on the verge of falling asleep, it will be enough for me to become a fluent speaker of Spanish in the course of three class hours per week for two academic semesters.” There is nothing in the research that suggests that this kind of approach is productive for anyone. In fact, many foreign language instructors believe that learning a language is not significantly different from learning to swim, learning to drive, learning to play basketball or learning to play

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the piano because, as explained in the old joke about New York, the answer to the question “How can I get to Carnegie Hall?” is always “Practice, practice, practice.” Indeed, one of the most important factors for language learning success is time on task. As teachers, therefore, we must construct our courses in such a way to make certain that our students invest that time. To the best of my knowledge, it still has not been proven that time spent completing web-based activities is in any way better than time spent completing exercises in a traditional lab manual or workbook, but one can guess that the students who are engaged with Youtube and Facebook and Twitter, let alone SecondLife, are more inclined to choose

interactive work on their computers rather than more traditional work with pen and paper workbook exercises. Integrating technology-based learning tasks may help seduce our students to spend more time on task, and doing so is often in accordance with an institutional goal of promoting technological literacy for all its graduates.

In the comparison journey, we were driving in a vehicle, with a map, using known (if limited and ever more costly) resources. When it comes to discussing classroom instruction, it seems that there is some consensus on the kinds of activities that constitute productive learning tasks at the lower levels of college foreign language instruction if one is to judge on the basis of textbooks published for the commonly taught languages. Indeed, the research on language learning outcomes cited above (Brecht, Davidson, Ginsberg, 1993; Jackson and Kaplan, 2001; Magnan, 1986; Omaggio-Hadley, 2001; Rifkin, 2005; Thompson, 1996; and Tschirner, 1996) suggests that students can rapidly progress from not being able to function at all in the language to being able to function at the Intermediate level. The next step, however, from Intermediate to Advanced, seems to be a very steep one. Students of Russian, for example, typically do not achieve Advanced-level proficiency without over 700 hours of instruction; students of Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean typically do not attain this level without over 1100 hours of instruction, or almost three times the number of classroom contact hours (400) available for a typical college foreign language major. The range of published materials for Advanced-level instruction is meager compared to materials available at the Novice and Intermediate levels, perhaps because publishers see fewer profits in the Advanced market, especially for languages other than ESL or Spanish. If interaction in the beginning-level classroom can be focused on sentence-level discourse, interaction at a higher level needs to be different because at that level we are encouraging students to strive for paragraph-length discourse or longer. This has significant implications for the nature of classroom turn taking, the orientation of the texts we assign our students to read and listen to, as described by Child (1987), as

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well as content in upper-level classes as Malone et al. have described (2004). Each of these factors shapes the process of learning and teaching. It is of critical importance to remember the wide range of interests of our students and make connections to other disciplines, as suggested by the national standards for foreign language learning, to focus attention on the study of our target cultures in the broadest possible context. It is essential to engage our students in the study of the texts that shape and reflect the mindset of the people who live in the cultures we teach: the place of Molière, Goethe, and Cervantes in our curricula is secure. But we should also expose our students to other aspects of the cultures we study. For instance, our students' learning experience is enhanced by taking up the analysis of controversies in our target cultures, reading about the economic expansion and environmental concerns in Korea, women's rights and traditional cultural practices in the Middle East, media ownership and freedom of expression in Russia, and questions of memory, justice, and reconciliation in any post-totalitarian culture. In the discussion of these contemporary issues, students not only learn about the historical and cultural contexts in which these arguments unfold in the target cultures, but they can also compare their analysis of the target culture with their understanding of American society. Students can be encouraged to reach out to target-culture communities in the campus area, on-line in the target culture itself or around the world, to ask native speaker interlocutors about their impressions of these issues.

## **Conclusions: Are We There Yet?**

The future for foreign language instruction in the United States looks both very promising and challenging.

We continue to enjoy teaching students who seek instruction in foreign languages and cultures to read a favorite author in the original, while welcoming students interested in working with language skills in the private, public, and non-profit sectors. Study abroad opportunities are greater in number and broader in type than ever before; there are now study abroad programs with service learning opportunities, internship opportunities, home-stays rather than dormitory experiences, and more and more scholarships available to bring these opportunities within reach of our students. Indeed, study abroad opportunities now attract students to our language curricula, rather than only the other way around. The Internet brings our base culture and our target culture closer than they ever were before with social media websites such as Facebook and Twitter, operating not only in the United States but also in many of our target cultures, as well as other websites at which our students interact with others in the target language, such as SecondLife. Heritage communities send us their children and welcome our students to their cultural events. Students and institutions have more opportunities to win federal scholarships and grants to support foreign language instruction, especially for languages spoken outside of Western Europe.

Of course we face numerous challenges, too. According to a national survey on foreign language teaching in American K-12 schools (Rhodes and Pufahl, 2009) administered by the Center for Applied Linguistics in collaboration with Westat, a statistical survey research organization, with funding from the United States Department of Education, there have been substantial reductions in language offerings at the elementary level and in certain languages (French, German, Japanese, and

Russian) at both the elementary and secondary levels. These reductions have likely already had an impact on enrollment patterns in the post-secondary sector. Language programs once vibrant, in part due to enrollments flowing in from the high school level, may find themselves in dire straits. Deans and provosts look closely at the number of majors graduating each year as a key factor in the allocation of resources, and notifications of language program closures seem to occur with greater frequency. Retired tenure-stream faculty are not being replaced or are being replaced by part-time instructors whose commitment to growing the language program may be as limited as the time for which they are paid to teach our students.

In the context of these challenges, we should and must engage in the pressing work of building consensus on the design of our curricula. I recommend that we take the following steps:

1. Bring together language faculty at all ranks, undergraduate and graduate students, alumni, teachers from the K-12 sector, community (heritage school) teachers, prospective employers, and colleagues from area studies disciplines to articulate the goals of our foreign language programs.
2. This group should articulate backward to the benchmark moments of the completion of each of the preceding three years of instruction at the college level and develop and implement appropriate assessment processes to evaluate instruction at each benchmark moment.
3. We should identify weaknesses in our curriculum, as evidenced in assessment data and work together to address them (e.g., by deploying different kinds of learning tasks, enhancing curricular articulation, improving instructional practices, and/or developing and/or adopting new materials).
4. We should demonstrate our students' success to the larger academic community as well as to the community at large.

Certainly there are programs where such processes are already in place; they are to be commended and emulated. I must also emphasize that is not my intention here to suggest what any given program's learning outcomes should be: each language program exists in its own context and the participants (learners, instructors, administrators, alumni, potential employers, members of prospective graduate school admissions committees) in each language program have their own unique goals and interests. In articulating their own program's learning outcomes goal, they will address the most important challenges for us as foreign language educators: (1) building support for longer sequences of instruction; (2) placing our curricula at the heart of the liberal arts mission — both in colleges with a foreign language requirement as well as in those without one — by emphasizing our role in education for global citizenship and by engaging students in research on “the foundations of knowledge and inquiry ... about culture and society ... [with a recognition] of the importance of historical and cultural context” (Association of American Colleges & Universities, 1998); and (3) focusing not only in the study of literature, but more broadly on the study of our target cultures through the disciplinary prisms of history, sociology, economics, or politics, for example, as described more fully in the recent MLA Ad Hoc Committee on

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Foreign Language Report on Foreign Language Education (2007) and consistent with the five C's of the national standards. Indeed, the success of such efforts will help the foreign language field reposition itself from the margins to the center of the liberal arts education, a position from which we in the foreign language field can collaborate with colleagues in other disciplines, students with a diverse range of interests and purposes, and partners beyond the campus to pursue common goals, both in the short-term and the long-term. Working together on the articulation of foreign language curricula and expected outcomes statements will help our programs overcome the challenges posed by administrators who may be unsympathetic to our field and by budgetary constraints that seem tighter with each year.

## Notes

1. This essay is based on a presentation delivered at Boston University in February 2008.
2. This US Department of State uses a classification system consisting of three groups, according to J. Bernhardt of the State Department (personal communication, January 5, 2010). In this system, some languages in DLI Category 2 are shifted into a State Department system group called "world languages" together with the Romance languages of DLI Category 1, while others are classified with the DLI Category 3 languages as "hard languages" (including the Slavic languages, Turkic languages, Hebrew, and many languages of South Asia). The DLI Category 4 languages are classified in the State Department system as "superhard" (Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean). For more information, see Jackson and Kaplan (2001) and the US Government Accountability Office Report to the Chairman of the US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations (2006).
3. This matter is very different for heritage learners, who come to our curricula typically with greater proficiency in speaking and listening than in reading and writing, especially for the non-alphabetic languages.

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## How and why did the Spanish curriculum get supersized? And how can we fix it?<sup>1</sup>

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**Sheri Spaine Long**, *University of Alabama/U.S. Air Force Academy*

### Abstract

This paper examines the state of the introductory Spanish curriculum from a pedagogue's perspective and discusses the cultural, professional, and societal forces that have expanded it. This paper connects the cultural movement of postmodernism to curricular expansion. The introductory Spanish curriculum is overloaded and has been "supersized" over the last few decades. A case is made for reducing the curriculum with an eye to pruning the introductory Spanish grammar canon in particular.

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The purpose of this paper is to look at the state of the introductory Spanish curriculum from a practitioner's perspective and to consider the forces that have expanded it. I will also advocate for reducing the curriculum. The introductory Spanish curriculum is overloaded and has been "supersized" over the last few decades. The complete grammar sequence is now taught along side the generous amounts of culture, learning strategies, and extra-disciplinary materials that currently form the introductory Spanish menu. Much like Colombian artist Fernando Botero's figures, the introductory Spanish curriculum has grown "overinflated." The time has come to reach an agreement about what needs to remain in it. That consensus should reflect the will and experience of Spanish teachers and researchers. I am calling particularly for pruning the grammar sequence to construct

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**Sheri Spaine Long** (Ph.D., UCLA) is Professor of Spanish at the University of Alabama at Birmingham and is currently serving as Distinguished Visiting Professor at the U.S. Air Force Academy. She teaches Spanish language, literature, and culture. Her publications include eight co-authored college textbooks as well as over 40 scholarly articles, notes and reviews on literature, culture, and language pedagogy. She is Editor of *Hispania*.

a sustainable introductory Spanish curriculum. We should plan this reduction in the context of the entire introductory Spanish curriculum through discipline-wide discussion, consensus, and implementation.

For purposes of this discussion, I understand “introductory Spanish” to mean the first two beginning semesters of college Spanish and/or the first two years of high school Spanish. I understand the “traditional introductory Spanish curriculum” to mean coverage of all verb tenses, a fixed set of grammar points, and high frequency vocabulary items.

By the late 1980s and early 1990s, full geo-cultural coverage was being added to introductory Spanish. More recently, a variety of additions like learning strategies, literacy development, process writing, and community engagement have all crept into the introductory Spanish curriculum. At present, most of us are attempting to teach what could be called “introductory Spanish plus,” which is a combination of the old traditional introductory Spanish grammar and vocabulary curriculum along with culture, connections, and communities as originally advocated by the

*Standards for foreign language learning: Preparing for the 21<sup>st</sup> century* (1996).

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*The supersizing of the introductory Spanish curriculum has been in the works since the late 1970s and the early 1980s, when new, definable foreign language teaching methods came onto the scene as innovations. [...] Yet, despite the boom in delivery methods, the introductory Spanish curriculum remained steadfastly focused on grammar and vocabulary.*

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Let us consider how introductory Spanish became supersized in the first place. The supersizing of the introductory Spanish curriculum has been in the works since the late 1970s and the early 1980s, when new, definable foreign language teaching methods came onto the scene as innovations. Foreign language educators transitioned from the “old reliable” grammar/translation approach to the Audio-lingual Method; yet others sampled Suggestopedia or the Silent Way. The fresh techniques were instructional methods that promoted self-awareness and drew attention to process and a desire to invigorate foreign language learning.

Motivated by evolving knowledge about language acquisition and a will to be up-to-date, many foreign language instructors were consumers of the latest foreign language teaching methods. Yet, despite the boom in delivery methods, the introductory Spanish curriculum remained steadfastly focused on grammar and vocabulary. Teaching methods evolved, but the traditional curriculum did not. Revealing the misalignment between static content and evolving processes, the expansion of the repertoire of methods helped set the scene for the expansion of content that blossomed in the 1980s.

With the shift in the humanities from structuralism<sup>2</sup> to postmodernism, content was reconsidered and curricular boundaries broadened. This motivated us to include more and more content in the introductory curriculum. We added more culture to prepare our students to be global citizens, we added Spanish for the workplace to prepare students professionally, and we included varieties of spoken Spanish to highlight regional variations. By the 1990s and on into the new century,

## How and why did the Spanish curriculum get supersized?

a variety of forces fueled the content boom in our field, including postmodernism, globalization, a growing preference in educational circles for interdisciplinarity, and the publication of *Standards for Foreign Language Learning* (1996). Additionally, all of this coincided with the establishment of digital communication and a new abundance of potential subject matter.

The period label “postmodernism” was popularized in the late 1960s and 70s. To this day, postmodernism continues to dominate as the descriptor of our period. Postmodernism is a broad term that suggests the paradoxical nature the “subject.” As our present subject is the pedagogy and curriculum of Introductory Spanish, early postmodernism challenged fixed boundaries and helped lead the foreign language field to question and reform many practices in methodology and much traditional content. Postmodernism helped explain the boom in language teaching methodologies that were popularized in the early 1970s. Later the tendency toward postmodernism as an intellectual movement also catalyzed the inclusion of diverse cultural content from marginal cultures (along side hegemonic cultures) in the Introductory Spanish curriculum. Undoubtedly, postmodernism led us to question the conventions in our field, and it enhanced the complexity and size of the Introductory Spanish curriculum through more inclusion. Early postmodernism tended to “problematize” and individualize pedagogical and curricular practices. As postmodernism evolved, more recently it has been adopted and mainstreamed by corporate entities such as educational institutions, professional organizations, and the publishers of our instructional materials. Ironically, early postmodernism divided and fragmented our discipline, but the newer “evolved” postmodernism offers potential for unity through its “corporate capacity” to encourage debate and dialogue through institutional structures. Even as early as the 1990s, a corporate postmodern approach (that recognized multiple points of view) could be witnessed during the discipline-wide debate about standards in our field. The dialogue, guided by American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, produced the *Standards for foreign language learning: Preparing for the 21<sup>st</sup> century* (1996).

The Standards’ five Cs—Communication, Cultures, Comparisons, Connections, and Communities—became the handmaiden of postmodernism. They defined goals for our teaching and moved us outward from the basic grammar and vocabulary set. We compared L1 (language 1) with L2 (language 2), C1 (culture 1) with C2 (culture 2), made connections with other disciplines, and engaged with other communities. The Standards still stand as the only document that sought a national consensus, from the grassroots to the leadership level, to define our teaching. Our professional renewal through the articulation of the Standards followed the broader societal tendency toward postmodernism.<sup>3</sup>

Let me provide a concrete example about how postmodernism influenced the introductory Spanish curriculum. Postcolonial theory,<sup>4</sup> inspired to a certain extent by postmodern philosophy, raised concerns about Eurocentrism in school curricula and

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demanded the teaching of multiple histories and people. The insistence on leveling differences was (and is) considered part of enlightened teaching and learning. Our introductory Spanish courses included increasingly broader definitions of Spanish-speakers and the Spanish-speaking world. Our books and syllabi covered more Spanish speaking populations than ever before. The claim of full coverage in introductory Spanish, which originally encompassed only full grammar coverage, ballooned to include cultural representations from the entire Spanish-speaking world.<sup>5</sup>

Another driver of curricular expansion is the movement toward interdisciplinary teaching and learning, which crosses traditional academic boundaries. Since the reports published by the Modern Language Association (MLA)—*Foreign Language and Higher Education: New Structures for a Changed World* (2007) and the *Report to the Teagle Foundation on the Undergraduate Major in Language and Literature* (2008)—the MLA has codified and canonized interdisciplinarity as the avenue to revitalize our profession. The reports challenge Spanish programs to be more interdisciplinary and cite the success of examples like “Spanish for the Professions.” To be sure, languages for the professions have increased enrollments in Spanish, but there is no doubt that hybridized curricula stimulate an even more inflated introductory Spanish course. For example, students on the Spanish for the Professions track need to be engaged in Spanish-speaking communities early for optimal success.

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As postmodernism encouraged more and varied content, it also brought us the concept of customization of the introductory Spanish curriculum. We were now able to customize our introductory courses with additional content, rarely adding student contact hours or subtracting other material. The introductory Spanish curriculum became more and more like a buffet. Many of the dishes did not make students or professors wise, but instead stuffed them with trivia, because we did not (and do not) have enough time to examine facts in their socio-historical context. Meanwhile the full grammar sequence remained unscathed as we added features to serve our own interests and/or the needs of our student populations. These additions were not bad in themselves. They enriched our students and us and stimulated more critical interactions in our classes. But introductory Spanish just kept supersizing.

The staggering array of ancillary materials that accompany introductory Spanish textbook programs is evidence of the impact of customization. On the up side, we can reach out to individual learners with customized options. On the down side, postmodernism moved us further away from seriously considering the issue of overload and analyzing what really belongs in the introductory Spanish curriculum and why. Dialogue about the excess should have occurred, but it did not due to the divisive tendency and fragmented nature of early postmodernism. As a result, a singular professional discussion about the introductory Spanish curriculum became more and more remote.

## How and why did the Spanish curriculum get supersized?

In the mid 1990s and the new millennium, as postmodernism was adopted by corporate ideology<sup>6</sup>, Spanish teachers found themselves in a quandary. We needed to sell Spanish to keep our student enrollment numbers high, which affected the quality of the students' education. We sacrificed quality for the sake of quantity and got a hefty curriculum and increased student enrollments. The overinflated introductory Spanish curriculum became dangerous because it watered down learning through information overload. Students cannot properly digest the feast of information provided to them in a two-semester college or two-year high school introductory Spanish course sequence.

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Other scholars and teachers have raised the issue of overload and questioned the full grammar sequence. Notably, Heining-Boyton (2010), wrote a position paper titled "The Case for a Realistic Beginning-Level Grammar Syllabus: The Round Peg in the Round Hole." Heining-Boyton (2010) argues vigorously for the reduction of grammar:

The time has come to create a realistic grammar syllabus in our beginning language courses. Yet why do some in our profession insist that all grammar must be taught in the first year of language learning? Abundant data from decades of research on topics such as human memory, chunking, and second language acquisition exist that overwhelmingly support not to do so, but rather to frontload language learning with only the necessary grammar to have students communicate at a beginning, appropriate level. The research supports the goal of presenting grammar at the point of need and usage. (p. 96)

I concur that have we spent too many years with an embargo on reducing the traditional introductory Spanish grammar sequence, especially when this front loading of grammar—the premature teaching of grammar with the expectation of early production—contradicts what we know about second language acquisition (SLA). The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) has Proficiency Guidelines for Speaking and Writing that reflect the cumulative knowledge of SLA research. The proficiency guidelines suggest that Novice- through Intermediate-level learners over time develop emerging skills in narration and description (at the Intermediate-High level). The guidelines also state that learners are not able to hypothesize until the Advanced proficiency level (ACTFL, 1999, 2001). The proficiency guidelines support the notion that comprehensive coverage of grammar tenses is not necessary in the introductory curriculum.

We resist the redesign of the full grammar sequence in introductory Spanish for a number of reasons.

1. **Practicality.** Making changes in introductory Spanish impacts later courses and implies a total curricular overhaul.
2. **Fear.** If we subtract grammar, it will look like we are doing less than

our peers. Ironically, the accountability “push” blocks reform because of assessment pressure. In the absence of a national curriculum, accrediting agencies typically ask us to compare what we do with our Spanish programs at our peer institutions. Accountability proponents argue that measurement encourages reform, but reform is paralyzed when we are told that our Spanish programs are measured by what is being done at our peer institutions. There is no motivation to appear to be doing less than those at the peer institution.

3. **More fear.** There is also the perception that transfer students will not be able to keep up if they do not “get exposed” to the full introductory grammar sequence. Measurement of coverage is part of a review process that works against containing the amount of grammar. The assessment of grammar is concrete and measurable, while the measurement of proficiency and performance is not as tidy, so grammar instruction maintains its appeal.

I recently served as an external reviewer of a Spanish program for an unnamed university. I suggested that they slow down the two-semester introductory Spanish program (that included all grammar tenses) and spread it over three semesters. The adjunct instructors who taught introductory Spanish were interested in this because of their frustration with the sprint to cover the full grammar sequence over the entire book. The Spanish program leadership, who were junior faculty members, felt obligated to stick with the amount of material that had been taught at the institutions where they

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went to graduate school. They also feared that senior faculty members would think that they were trying to “dumb down” the curriculum and that students would be less prepared for the major. I have heard similar statements made by high school Spanish teachers who fear not preparing students for AP Spanish language or the National Spanish Exam.

Textbook publishers follow the market data that they collect from professors and teachers and often hear statements about the inclusion of comprehensive grammar because there is a perception in the teaching corps and the professoriate that limiting the grammar sequence would imply a downgrade in learning.<sup>7</sup> Publishers are not motivated to produce materials with a truncated grammar sequence because such materials are risky to market. There has been some experimentation with an abbreviated grammar sequence, but it has not reached the mainstream. Meanwhile, we continue to tell publishers that programs should include everything and still provide

flexibility and lots of options. As instructors we clearly fear not covering our bases.

4. **Elitism.** Heining-Boyton (2010) points out that there is the strong belief in the myth that all grammar must be taught in introductory Spanish (98). The complete grammar canon myth is self-propagating, deeply personal,

## How and why did the Spanish curriculum get supersized?

and relates to the inner snob of some foreign language instructors. At its heart is the view that if “I had to learn all of the grammar in the first year of Spanish, then so will my students.” As Spanish instructors, many of us take great pride in explaining difficult grammar points and our students and others think that we are geniuses! With proposed grammar reform in the introductory courses, we need to move this grammar glory and prowess to upper-level courses.

Both research and practicality support trimming full grammar coverage from introductory Spanish. Over the last few years, there has been a grassroots effort to slow down the grammar (and other content) in introductory Spanish by using an introductory text over three semesters instead of two. We have done this in my institution’s Spanish program. There are no published data about how many post-secondary institutions are doing the same, but publishers of Spanish textbooks will share anecdotally that there is a growing trend to use introductory texts over three semesters. This is a partial and temporary solution.

Heining-Boyton (2010) suggested using proficiency descriptors to refocus the grammar scope and sequence so that students can effectively narrate in the present and begin to do so in the past and future tenses in introductory Spanish (99). Second language acquisition specialists need to share solutions informed by their research and stimulate this discussion about grammar and content reform. It is in our best interest to reach a broad consensus on the amount of grammar that belongs in introductory Spanish. A successful discussion about the definition of introductory level grammar allows us to include what we—teachers, professors, and researchers—view as essential to teach at this level. The construction of the grammar canon should belong to the men and women who are best qualified to decide what students should learn: their teachers.<sup>8</sup> I am not advocating that all of the other elements that have supersized the introductory Spanish curriculum be tossed aside, but that a more reasonable amount of content be included. I am arguing that our curriculum has become too full and that it is our responsibility to reduce it. Let us consider the whole introductory curriculum and particularly the grammar sequence.

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Teachers are under considerable pressure to produce, have their students produce, and define what students should know and be able to do. In this paper, I have acknowledged the tension that is served up by a variety of cultural, societal, and professional trends, especially postmodernism, which was originally used to subvert and lead society to a general crisis of meaning, but over the years has been mainstreamed by state power and the corporate world. Foreign language education is likely to follow this trend. The postmodernism of the 1980s set us off on curricular tangents and helped supersize the introductory Spanish curriculum. Ironically, “evolved” postmodernism may now help us discuss and define how much and which grammar belongs in the

introductory Spanish scope and sequence. As it stands, the introductory Spanish curriculum is too unwieldy for us to teach and for students to grasp. We need to tackle this problem directly and propose a sensible scope and sequence. It behooves us to take a unilateral stand as a profession if we expect to see any change in what is expected of us as professors and of our students as second language learners. Let us make this discussion a priority.

## Acknowledgments

Special thanks goes to my colleague Dr. Lamia Ben Youssef Zayzafoon of the University of Alabama at Birmingham for reading the drafts, especially her insightful comments on postmodernism.

## Notes

1. This paper is adapted from a panel presentation given at the 2010 American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese in Guadalajara, Mexico. The panel was titled "Less is more: Addressing the bloated curriculum." My co-panelists were Bill VanPatten and James Lee. In the interest of full disclosure, VanPatten, Lee, and I are coauthors of different introductory college Spanish textbook programs. Through textbook development, revisions, and feedback received from colleagues and publishers, we meet matters related to introductory Spanish content head-on with regularity.
2. Structuralism of the 1950s and 60s was concerned with the analysis of language, culture, and society through the examination of signs, symbols, and semiotics. Audiolingualism was the language pedagogy most closely associated with structuralism in the United States.
3. I do not want to suggest that the postmodern movement has been the sole impetus for change in our field in recent times. Evolving knowledge about language learning has informed our collective progress as well. In this paper, I emphasize the influence of postmodernism on the foreign language field because it has been overlooked in our professional literature.
4. Postcolonial theory is typically discussed as part of the postmodern movement. Postcolonial theory is a term that describes the multiple approaches used to examine the culture(s) of the former colonies of the European empires (Makaryk, 1993). Postcolonialists question heritage and civilization directly and have a long history of presenting a narrative to counter cultural hegemony.
5. Some theorists and practitioners suggested that the erosion of the curricular boundaries and the beefing up of multicultural education would lessen ethnic, religious, or political strife and promote world peace.
6. Corporate ideology has been able to apply the questioning nature of postmodernism to business practices to produce philosophies such as "continuous quality improvement." Practices of this nature have entered the educational arena. Additionally, the capitalist underpinnings of corporate ideology have promoted accountability and outcomes-based educational practices. For better or worse, these practices have impinged on the status of the traditional liberal arts education

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and have affected the foreign language field. Despite current data suggesting the need for more language teaching in the United States, foreign language instructors have been put on the defensive due to increased corporatization. For an in-depth account of the growing corporate culture in education, see *The last professors: the corporate university and the fate of the humanities* (Donoghue, 2008).

7. This is ironic because reducing the grammar curriculum would better prepare learners by giving them time to digest, acquire, and internalize the material before they proceed on the language-learning continuum.
8. As instructors, we *do* need to accept responsibility for the current curricular crisis. Instructors need to be educated and engaged in curricular decision making.

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## Motivation, race, and foreign language instruction: The need for culturally responsive teaching

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Scott Kissau, *University of North Carolina at Charlotte*

Lan Quach Kolano, *University of North Carolina at Charlotte*

Chuang Wang, *University of North Carolina at Charlotte*

### Abstract

Despite recent evidence suggesting that Black students in the United States continue to lack motivation to pursue foreign language (L2) studies in comparison with their peers of other races, very little research has been conducted related to this topic in the past ten years. The purpose of this study was to provide a more current analysis of the motivation of young Black students to learn Spanish at one large inner-city high school in the United States. Building upon Gardner's (1985) model of L2 motivation, a mixed methodology was employed to investigate differences in motivational factors among racial groups at a diverse high school in the southeastern

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**Scott Kissau** (PhD., University of Windsor) is an Assistant Professor of Second Language Education at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte where he is the Coordinator of the Master's of Arts and Teaching Foreign Languages program. His research relates to gender and language learning, online language instruction, and the beliefs of effective foreign language teachers.

**Lan Quach Kolano** (PhD., University of North Carolina) is an Associate Professor of Second Language Education at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. She is the Coordinator of the Master's of Arts and Teaching English as a Second Language Programs. Her research relates to multicultural teacher education, second language acquisition/identity development and heritage language retention.

**Chuang Wang** (PhD., Ohio State University) is an Associate Professor of Educational Research at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte where he teaches educational research courses. His research interests include self-efficacy beliefs and self-regulated learning behaviors of students learning English as a second /foreign language.

United States. Fifty-seven students studying Level I Spanish participated in the study by completing a questionnaire at two different times in the semester. Individual interviews were conducted with select students to further examine racial differences in motivation to learn Spanish. Although the findings indicated that Black students are no less motivated to study Spanish than their peers, the results also showed that perceived lack of cultural relevance among some Black students may jeopardize their motivation to pursue learning the language. To respond to some of the findings, the researchers suggest that L2 teachers adopt a more culturally responsive approach to teaching foreign languages to engage all students in the language learning classroom.

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*There are many benefits associated with the study of a foreign language (L2).*

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There are many benefits associated with the study of a foreign language (L2). A study by the National Education Association (NEA) found that L2 study offers students cognitive, cultural, and economic advantages (2007). Results indicated that L2 study helps students make academic progress in other subjects, improve basic skills development, and increase higher order, abstract, and creative thinking. Additionally, it was reported that the study of an L2 enhances students' sense of achievement, increases their standardized test scores, and improves their chances of college acceptance. In terms of cultural benefits, L2 study was found to result in increased understanding and respect of other cultures, thus creating a greater tolerance of the differences among people. In its study, the NEA (2007) also reported that in an era of an increasingly global marketplace, L2 study enhances career opportunities for students.

Despite the advantages of learning another language, evidence continues to suggest that many American youth lack interest in L2 studies. Studies spread out over the past 30 years have demonstrated that Black students, in particular, are under-represented in L2 programs in the United States (Brigman & Jacobs, 1981; Hodges & Welch, 1992; Moore, 2005; U.S. Department of Education, 2006). Brigman and Jacobs (1981) conducted a study exploring the participation and success of minority students in L2 programs. The researchers noted that at the high school level, fewer Black students (52%) than White students (72%) studied an L2 for one or more years. More than 10 years after this study, Hodges and Welch (1992) reported that the increased interest in L2 learning in the United States has not translated into more Black youth participating in L2 programs.

More recent reports suggest that the lack of interest among Black students in L2 studies extends beyond secondary school. In an article describing the celebration of National Foreign Language Week at one of the largest Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) in the United States, Farfan-Cobb and Lassiter (2003) reported that although a large number of their students take an L2 class, very few decide to pursue a major or minor in L2 studies. Further, a large-scale survey conducted by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (2007) revealed that Black students in the United States represent the racial group least likely to continue the study of an L2 after high school.

Fewer Black students pursuing post-secondary L2 studies translate into fewer Black students receiving L2 teacher training. Moore (2005) noted that between January

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1994 and December 2003, of the over 300 students enrolled in an L2 teacher training program at the University of Texas at Austin, only six were Black. Few Black students pursuing L2 teacher training, ultimately, results in few Black L2 teachers. Farfan-Cobb and Lassiter (2003) reported that at the HBCU involved in their research, only three out of 10 L2 faculty members were “people of color” (p. 398).

Given what we know about the benefits of L2 learning, more research is needed that explores why Black students in the United States continue to be under-represented in L2 programs. The fact that many of the studies that have investigated this important topic are dated underscores the need for such research. The following research study responds to this need by examining quantitative and qualitative data collected from both students and teachers at one large urban high school in the southeastern region of the United States.

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## Review of the Literature

### *Reasons for lack of interest*

A variety of reasons have been suggested for the lack of participation among Black students in L2 studies. Researchers have attempted to explain the lack of interest or motivation of Black students with theories of linguistic deficits, cultural relevance and resistance theories, pedagogical deficiencies, and lack of preparation and exposure to L2 studies.

**Linguistic Deficits.** One particularly controversial explanation relates to the existence of linguistic deficiencies among Black students in the United States. Orr (1987) argued that the language differences between standard English and Black English vernacular may be impeding Black students’ success in school. The findings of a more recent study by Kubota, Austin, and Saito-Abbott (2003) add additional credence to the controversial argument that weak English skills are discouraging many Black students from studying another language. In the study, when asked why so few of her Black peers pursue L2 studies, a female Black student commented, “I think a lot of times, they are discouraged, just in general. They don’t want to learn foreign language when a lot of them have trouble with English” (Kubota et al., 2003, p. 20).

**Cultural Relevance.** Other explanations for the under-representation of Black students in L2 programs in the United States have focused on social and cultural distance theories. According to Schumann’s Acculturation Theory (1976), students who experience little similarity between the first and L2 cultures, often referred to as social distance, will struggle with the language learning process, and may lack motivation as a result. Guillaume (1994) asserted that the failure to connect language learning with Black students’ hopes and concerns for the future is another cause for lack of enrollment. He proposed that Black students hold a false view that foreign languages are for majority groups.

To reduce the social distance that Black students may experience in L2 classrooms, Davis (1992) and others (Clark, 1980, 1982; Dathorne, 1974) have suggested making the curriculum and materials more appealing, more appropriate, and more relevant to Black students. Clark (1982) found that Black students in elementary language courses often cannot relate to the course material and find it culturally irrelevant. On a similar note, Clowney and Legge (1979) suggested implementing a more inclusive L2 curriculum that includes materials written by Black authors to diminish Black students' feelings of indifference and irrelevance.

Other research, however, seems to reject the notion that Black students are seeking greater cultural relevance in L2 programs. In the course of writing his dissertation that focused on assessing attitudes and opinions of first and second year L2 students enrolled at HBCUs, Davis (1990) noticed a discrepancy between students' expressed interests and the courses for which they actually registered. Davis (1990) found that while many Black students indicated a preference to learn African languages, enrollment in these courses was generally low. He indicated that although many Black students in the United States believe they should want to learn an African language, they are also struggling to be part of the mainstream American college experience, which often equates with studying a European language (Davis, 1990).

**Resistance.** More recent research suggests that Black students may steer away from advanced-level L2 classes not because of their lack of cultural relevance, but rather to avoid the "burden of acting White" (Tyson, Darity, & Castellino, 2005, p. 585). While not specific to the study of foreign languages, studies over the past 25 years investigating the under-achievement and under-representation of Black students in advanced-level courses have made reference to an "oppositional culture hypothesis" (Downey & Ainsworth-Darnell, 2002; Farkas, Lleras, & Maczuga, 2002). According to this hypothesis, high achieving Black students and those who participate in courses traditionally populated by White students face criticism and ridicule from their Black peers for acting White.

In a study by Tyson et al. (2005) investigating the under-representation of Black high school students in advanced placement and honors courses, the researchers reported that while the burden of acting White was not pervasive among 85 high school students in North Carolina high schools, it did exist among a small minority. In only one of the participating eight high schools did the researchers find evidence of Black students being ridiculed for acting White by their Black peers because of their academic success and behavior. A more common explanation given in the study for the under-representation of Black students in these classes is their fear of failure and isolation from their Black peers. The researchers went on to suggest that the burden of acting White is influenced by socioeconomics and that it is more likely to exist in schools with large populations of both Black and White students and where there are large socioeconomic differences between the two groups.

**Pedagogical Deficiencies and Lack of Preparation and Exposure.** Specific to L2 classrooms, Davis and Markham (1991) have pointed to other explanations outside the realm of social distance and oppositional culture theories for the under-representation of Black students in L2 programs in the United States. In their study, it was reported that students at HBCUs held positive attitudes toward L2 study. The students' complaints

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and dissatisfaction generally had to do with pedagogical deficiencies. Of the 340 student-participants, 71% wanted to speak more of the language in the classroom, 55% wished their teachers had been more understanding of individual differences, and 54% wanted to know more about the culture of the L2.

Another explanation for the under-representation of Blacks in L2 programs has focused on inadequate high school preparation. Hodges and Welch (1992) noted that transition programs, aimed at nurturing potential talent among Black students in high school, have traditionally focused on strengthening English, math, and science competencies. Rarely have such programs emphasized L2 studies (Hodges & Welch, 1992). The researchers contend that one explanation for the lack of participation of Black students in L2 studies is that the high schools they attend often only offer two-year L2 programs and as a result do not emphasize the importance of L2 learning. According to Moore (2005), these brief two-year experiences are not enough to encourage the continuation of L2 study in college. Echoing a claim made 30 years earlier by Hubbard (1975), Moore (2005) reported that racial minority students in American high schools are not being encouraged to pursue foreign languages. Far from being encouraged to learn another language, Hubbard (1975) and later Tedick, Walker, Lange, Paige, and Jorstad (1993) argued that Black students in American high schools are often counseled out of L2 studies.

**Need for Research.** In addition to being contradictory in nature, many of the previously mentioned studies are dated. More current research needs to be done to better understand why so many Black students lack interest in learning an L2. This need is even greater with respect to the study of Spanish, a language that represents close to 70% of all L2 enrollment in the United States (Draper & Hicks, 2000). In a study investigating diversity in L2 classrooms, Kubota et al. (2003) reported that a lack of racial diversity is more dramatic in Spanish classes than in other language classrooms.

While the various reasons mentioned above may account for the under-representation of Black students in L2 programs in the United States, there is a growing body of research that indicates that the L2 teaching community can be more pro-active at meeting the needs of all students, including those who are Black. Connell and Wellborn (1991), for example, stress that teachers who wish to engage their students must first meet their psychological needs in the classroom. The researchers assert that students who feel they belong in the classroom, who feel they are competent, and who feel they have some control over their success will be engaged in the learning process (Connell & Wellborn, 1991). More recently Baskerville (2008) showed that there is a positive correlation between teacher practices and student engagement.

To meet the diverse psychological needs of their students, teachers must first understand those needs. Focusing specifically on this study, L2 teachers need to have a better understanding of their Black students and why many lack the motivation to pursue L2 studies. Based on the various explanations proposed in the literature there is currently no clear understanding of the reason for this lack of motivation. What

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is clear is that without knowledge of an L2, Black students may be limited in their choice of academic programs and degrees, and ultimately in their choice of profession (Brigman & Jacobs, 1981, Farfan-Cobb & Lassiter, 2003). With these concerns in mind, the researchers set out to better understand the current state of motivation among Black students to learn Spanish at one American high school. Using data from a larger research study that focused on gender differences in motivation to learn Spanish (see Kissau, Quach, & Wang, 2009; Kissau, Kolano, & Wang, 2010), this article explores motivational differences between Black students and their Non-Black peers in a Level I Spanish classroom.

### **Model of L2 Motivation**

As was described in the earlier work by Kissau et al. (2009, 2010), the current study was framed using Gardner's (1985) model of L2 motivation. Second language motivation, as described in this model, is composed of three sub-constructs: (1) Motivation (motivational intensity, desire and attitudes toward the L2); (2) Language Learning Orientation (integrative and instrumental orientations); and (3) Attitudes toward the Learning Situation (evaluations of the teacher, the course, and the teacher's competence). When choosing Gardner's model the researchers took into consideration criticism the model has previously received. Several researchers have argued that Gardner's model does not account for the changing nature of motivation (Peirce, 1995; Norton, 2000). Peirce (1995), for example, criticized Gardner's model for portraying L2 motivation as a fixed trait. This weakness in the model, however, has been addressed in this study. By using Gardner's model to measure student motivation at two distinct points in time, the researchers will be able to detect changes in motivation over time. For a more detailed description of each motivational factor included in the model see Kissau et al. (2009, 2010).

### **Method**

Using a mixed method design, the researchers explored possible motivational differences between Black<sup>1</sup> and Non-Black<sup>2</sup> students at the beginning and end of their first semester studying Spanish. In addition to the quantitative data collected from students via pre- and post-surveys, individual interviews were conducted to explore racial differences in motivation to learn Spanish. Surveys were administered at the beginning and end of the course (see Appendix). Next, the survey data were analyzed to look for differences between the responses of Black students and those of their peers. The researchers used these data to create a set of follow-up, open-ended interview questions for the participants to guide each semi-structured interview. Using both student and teacher interviews as additional data, the researchers examined and compared both the quantitative and qualitative data to identify emerging themes.

### **Participants**

One high school located in an urban setting in the southeastern United States was the research site. The school's population consisted of over 2100 students of diverse races. All students at the participating high school who were enrolled in Level I Spanish in the spring of 2008, as well as their Level I Spanish teachers, were invited to participate

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in the study. Approximately 57% of the students enrolled in the four different Level I Spanish classes completed the survey. However, of these 60 participants, only 57 surveys were included in the final data analysis due to incomplete data. In other words, three students did not respond to several of the items on the survey. Of these 57 student-participants, 33 (58%) reported to be Black and 24 were Non-Black (42%). Twenty-six of the participating students were male (43%) and 34 (57%) were female.

From the 57 student-participants who completed the questionnaire, a total of 16 were chosen to participate in follow-up interviews. Due to limited time, availability of space at the school, and conflicts in class schedules, the researchers were unable to interview the entire sample. Instead, purposeful random sampling was used to ensure that students from each racial group were represented. In other words, Black and Non-Black students were randomly selected to ensure that both racial groups represented in the survey analysis were also represented in the interview process. Half of the 16 students interviewed identified themselves as Black. The remaining eight students were Non-Black. For a more detailed description of the 16 students<sup>3</sup> interviewed see Table 1.

**Table 1.** *Student Demographics*

Pseudonym	Sex	Race	Age	Previous Spanish Course	Plans to study Spanish beyond 2-yr. requirement
Chris	Male	Non-Black	15	Yes	Unsure
Carlos	Male	Non-Black	18	No	Yes
Tiffany	Female	Black	15	No	Yes
Heather	Female	Non-Black	15	No	Yes
Katie	Female	Non-Black	15	No	Yes
Mike	Male	Non-Black	16	No	Yes
Angela	Female	Black	15	No	Yes
Anna	Female	Non-Black	15	No	Unsure
James	Male	Black	18	No	No
Tim	Male	Black	16	No	Yes
Beth	Female	Black	15	Yes	Unsure
Lucy	Female	Non-Black	16	No	Yes
Alex	Male	Black	18	No	No
Ginger	Female	Black	15	No	Unsure
Jon	Male	Non-Black	17	Yes (failed)	No
Ronnie	Male	Black	16	Yes	Unsure

The two teachers<sup>4</sup> who taught Level I Spanish at the participating school also took part in separate, follow-up interviews. Although Mr. Hernandez was a native-speaker of Spanish from Mexico and Ms. Smith was a Black female, born and raised in the United

States, they exhibited many similarities. Both teachers were in their early thirties and had been teaching Spanish for less than five years. They also had similar classroom management and teaching styles. Mr. Hernandez taught three Level I Spanish classes, and Ms. Smith taught one Level I class as well as two higher-level Spanish classes.

## Questionnaire

Quantitative data were collected from the student-participants through questionnaires. Students were instructed to circle a number on a seven-point Likert scale that best represented their response to statements pertaining to the motivational factors (7 = strongly agree; 1 = strongly disagree). Items included in the questionnaire were drawn primarily from the Attitude Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) designed by Gardner, Clément, Smythe, and Smythe (1979). The various measures from the AMTB included in the survey, along with their internal consistencies (in brackets), include Motivational Intensity (Cronbach's alpha = 0.82), Desire (Cronbach's alpha = 0.89), Attitudes toward the L2 (Cronbach's alpha = 0.94), Integrative Orientation (Cronbach's alpha = 0.86), Instrumental Orientation (Cronbach's alpha = 0.83), Teacher Evaluation (Cronbach's alpha = 0.92), Course Evaluation (Cronbach's alpha = 0.88), and Teacher Competence (Cronbach's alpha = 0.86). To assist readers in understanding the items used to measure each motivational sub-construct, the survey items are grouped in the Appendix according to their respective measure.

## Student and Teacher Interviews

Qualitative data were gathered from students and teachers via semi-structured interviews. The interviews were conducted individually by the researchers and lasted 15 to 30 minutes each. During the interviews students were asked to describe their own personal degree of motivation to learn Spanish as well as the reasons why they are studying the language. Similarly, the teacher-participants were asked to describe the motivation of their students and why they felt their students were or were not motivated to learn the language. Both students and teachers were also asked during interviews if they noticed any motivational differences between the racial groups represented in their Spanish classrooms.

## Data Analysis

The average rating of all items was used as an indicator of the total L2 motivation. Each sub-construct (Motivational Intensity, Desire, Attitudes toward the L2, Integrative Orientation, Instrumental Orientation, Teacher Evaluation, Course Evaluation, and Teacher Competence) was measured by the average rating of the corresponding items (see Appendix). Descriptive statistics of these constructs were reported using SPSS 16. Repeated measures Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was employed to examine

Box's test of equality of covariance matrices suggested that the assumption that the observed covariance matrices of the dependent variables were equal between Blacks and Non-Blacks was held,  $F(3, 216792) = 0.39, p = .76$ . No interaction between the variable to represent time (pre and post surveys) and student race (Blacks versus Non-Blacks) was noticed,  $F(1, 55) = 0.40, p = .53$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .01$ . The non-significant interaction suggested that both Black and Non-Blacks experienced the same trend of

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changes of motivation from the beginning to the end of semester. That is, an overall decrease was noticed for total L2 motivation for both Black and Non-Black students,  $F(1, 55) = 17.85, p < .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .25$ .

differences between Black and Non-Black students' total L2 motivation at the beginning and the end of the semester and the trend of changes from the beginning to the end of the semester. A doubly multivariate repeated measures ANOVA was used to examine the same differences and trend of changes for the combination of all sub-constructs of L2 motivation. Effect size (partial  $\eta^2$ ) was reported for each inferential statistics result. According to Cohen (1988), an effect size of .01 is considered small, .06 is considered medium, and .14 is considered large.

## Results

### *Survey Results*

Descriptive statistics of all constructs are presented in Table 2 (next page).

Similarly, no significant time and race interaction was found from the multivariate tests,  $F(8, 48) = 0.36, p = .94, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .06$ . In other words, the trend of change for each racial group was the same from pre-test to post-test. Overall, the Black and Non-Black students had experienced a significant drop in all sub-constructs of L2 motivation,  $F(8, 48) = 3.37, p = .004, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .36$ . Specifically, all participants in this study reported decreased motivation at the end of the semester in comparison to the beginning of the semester with respect to Motivational Intensity,  $F(1, 55) = 5.23, p = .03, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .09$ ; Desire,  $F(1, 55) = 6.88, p = .01, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .11$ ; Attitudes toward the L2,  $F(1, 55) = 10.03, p = .003, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .15$ ; Integrative Orientation,  $F(1, 55) = 13.20, p = .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .19$ ; Instrumental Orientation,  $F(1, 55) = 8.51, p = .005, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .13$ ; Teacher Evaluation,  $F(1, 55) = 17.62, p < .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .24$ ; Course Evaluation,  $F(1, 55) = 10.13, p = .002, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .16$ ; and Teacher Competence,  $F(1, 55) = 5.79, p = .02, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .10$ .

Although the trend of changes is uniform between Black and Non-Black students in the sample, the average level of Black students' Motivational Intensity was statistically significantly lower than that of Non-Black students,  $F(1, 55) = 6.98, p = .01, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .11$ . A closer look at the drop of Motivational Intensity within Blacks and Non-Blacks showed that the drop within Non-Black students was not statistically significantly different from zero,  $F(1, 23) = 0.24, p = .63, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .01$ , whereas the drop within Black students was statistically significantly different from zero,  $F(1, 32) = 9.31, p = .005, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .23$ . This result suggested that the Black students suffered a significantly greater decrease in their Motivational Intensity than did the Non-Black students from the beginning to the end of the semester. Tests of between-subjects effects did not reveal any statistically significant differences between Black and Non-Black students on other sub-constructs: Desire,  $F(1, 55) = 0.55, p = .46, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .01$ ; Attitudes toward the L2,  $F(1, 55) = 1.56, p = .22, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .03$ ; Integrative Orientation,  $F(1, 55) = 0.22, p = .64, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .004$ ; Instrumental Orientation,  $F(1, 55) = 0.08, p = .78, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .001$ ; Teacher Evaluation,  $F(1, 55) = 0.001, p = .98, \text{partial } \eta^2 < .001$ ; Course

**Table 2. Means and Standard Deviations (in parentheses) of Motivation by Race**

	Total	MI	Desire	Attitudes	IntO	InsO	TE	CE	TC	
Non-Blacks (n = 24)	Pre	5.37 (0.76)	5.40 (0.75)	5.47 (1.17)	5.61 (0.95)	5.55 (1.15)	5.24 (0.95)	5.23 (1.55)	5.36 (1.01)	5.45 (1.30)
	Post	5.07 (0.86)	5.33 (0.86)	5.19 (1.43)	5.35 (1.08)	5.09 (1.32)	4.92 (0.97)	4.70 (1.61)	4.88 (1.23)	5.14 (1.47)
Blacks (n = 33)	Pre	5.21 (0.87)	4.95 (0.95)	5.24 (1.26)	5.29 (1.37)	5.39 (1.43)	5.41 (1.10)	5.33 (1.28)	5.22 (0.98)	5.41 (1.16)
	Post	4.81 (0.99)	4.60 (0.96)	4.94 (1.18)	4.86 (1.49)	4.93 (1.54)	4.89 (1.36)	4.58 (1.48)	4.82 (1.06)	4.96 (1.41)

Note. Total = Total L2 Motivation; MI = Motivational Intensity; Attitudes = Attitudes toward L2;  
 IntO = Integrative Orientation; InsO = Instrumental Orientation; TE = Teacher Evaluation;  
 CE = Course Evaluation; and TC = Teacher Competence. A higher score indicates a more positive response.

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Evaluation,  $F(1, 55) = 0.17, p = .68$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .003$ ; and Teacher Competence,  $F(1, 55) = 0.11, p = .74$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .002$ .

## Interview Results

Three main themes emerged during the analysis of the interview data. Comments made by students and teachers that specifically addressed the topic of race and motivation to learn Spanish emphasized the positive nature of student attitudes toward the study of Spanish, their reasons for studying the language, and reasons why Black students may be less motivated to learn Spanish.

**Attitudes toward Studying Spanish.** The students interviewed had positive attitudes toward the study of Spanish. All 16, including the eight Black students, reported to be interested in learning Spanish and thought Spanish to be an important subject in high school. In fact, when asked if he liked learning Spanish, Tim, a 16-year-old Black student, responded emphatically that he loved learning the language and intended to study Spanish throughout high school. In total, eight of the 16 students planned to take more than the mandatory two years of Spanish in high school. Of these eight students, three were Black and five were Non-Black. Five students had not yet decided if they planned to continue studying Spanish throughout high school (3 Black and 2 Non-Black), and the remaining three students were not planning to study Spanish after completing Level II (Two Black students and one Non-Black student).

**Reasons for Studying Spanish.** While all students reported in the interviews to be motivated to learn Spanish, an interesting difference was noticed in the reasons behind their interest in studying the language. All eight Black students reported instrumental or practical reasons for studying Spanish. For example, Angela thought learning to speak Spanish would benefit her future career as a lawyer. James had plans to open up a restaurant in the future and thought it would be helpful to be able to speak in Spanish to his Latino customers, and Alex and Ronnie were taking Spanish specifically to fulfill graduation requirements and get accepted into university.

Only two of the eight Black students, both females, mentioned studying Spanish for integrative reasons in addition to instrumental or practical reasons. Tiffany and Ginger reported to be interested in learning Spanish in order to communicate with Spanish-speaking people or to better understand the Latino culture. Ginger, a 15-year-old Black student expressed the following reason for her interest in studying Spanish:

Because like with so many people like immigrants coming over and stuff, you want to communicate with them and sometimes you may not know what they're talking about and you feel left out or whatever, so I think it's good to like know a different language also cuz it may help you in the future. Cuz you never know what you end up doing or what job you may have.

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*While all students reported in the interviews to be motivated to learn Spanish, an interesting difference was noticed in the reasons behind their interest in studying the language. All eight Black students reported instrumental or practical reasons for studying Spanish.*

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In contrast to their Black counterparts, a greater number of the eight Non-Black students reported to be integratively oriented to learn Spanish. Half of the Non-Black students stated they were integratively oriented. In other words, they claimed to be learning Spanish for communication and cultural purposes. The remaining half of the Non-Black students reported career-related or instrumental objectives. When asked why he was studying Spanish, Mike, a 16-year-old White student replied, “Well, I mean, a bunch of people speak Spanish here, and in the world in general. You know, it’d be cool to learn to talk to them and not just sit there wondering what they’re saying all the time.”

**Reasons for Lack of Interest.** Both Spanish teachers felt that socioeconomic status played a role in student motivation to learn Spanish. The male Spanish teacher, Mr. Hernandez, explained that he has several Black, White, and Asian students who are highly motivated in his classes and who are doing very well. He added, however, that these are the students who come from good homes, who have access to books and technology, and who have someone at home who ensures that they do their homework. He hypothesized that the high rate of poverty among Black students at this particular school might be responsible for the unmotivated behaviors exhibited by some Black students.

The female Spanish teacher, Ms. Smith, also believed that poverty had a negative impact upon student motivation to learn Spanish, but made the point that the line between socioeconomic status and race is often blurred. Ms. Smith explained that by excelling in school or taking a course like foreign languages, which is stereotypically viewed by many Black people as consisting of primarily middle-class White students, Black students run the risk of being perceived as trying to climb the social ladder and trying to “act White.” She explained that many Black students steer clear of courses like Spanish and French or attempt to avoid being perceived as a high achiever in order to avoid resentment and ostracism from their peers. It is interesting to note, however, that social repercussions for “acting White” were not mentioned by any of the Black students as a reason why they might shy away from L2 studies. In fact, only one teacher made mention of Black students avoiding L2 classes so as not to be perceived as “acting White.”

The fact that very few of the students at the participating high school had previous exposure to Spanish-speaking Black people also appeared to contribute to the notion that L2 learning may not be culturally relevant behavior for Black students. This was made obvious during conversations with Ms. Smith, the Black teacher. She stated, “A girl made a comment, one of my students, she said, ‘That’s just weird that you know Spanish.’ She said there’s not many of us that speak more than one language.” The impact of having a Black Spanish teacher on the motivation of Black students was made clear by the following comment from Tiffany:

I’m like, as an African American woman teaching me how to speak Spanish, I’m like, “What?” Like, “How, what?” And she speaks it like extremely good. And I’m like, “Wow, you’re teaching me how to speak Spanish, and you’re African American, and I’m African American, you’re not Hispanic?” it’s like, “Hmm, wow, that’s interesting.” It’s positive for me, I don’t know about

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other people, but it's positive for me. To know that she's African American and she speaks fluent Spanish. I could be African American and could speak fluent Spanish.

The issue of cultural relevance was also raised by Ms. Smith during an informal conversation that ensued following the interview with a French teacher colleague. While discussing the growing number of Black students from Haiti and West Africa at the participating school, a distinction was drawn between these newly arrived Black students and their Black peers whose families have lived for generations in the United States. The teachers felt that Black students in L2 classrooms who recently arrived in this country and who have direct lineage to a country where the L2 is spoken as an official language have a personal and cultural connection to the language and are, as a result, more motivated to learn it in school. Black students, on the other hand, who have lived their whole lives in the United States, were believed by Ms. Smith to see little cultural relevance to learning an L2. This perception was not unique to L2 teachers. Angela, a Black student, stated, "They don't need to learn [Spanish] cuz they're Americans so they should speak English. That's the only language they have to learn." This notion that L2 learning is culturally irrelevant to many Black students, particularly those from lower socioeconomic echelons, was further bolstered by Tiffany, a 15-year-old Black student. When asked if she saw a use for Spanish in her community, she responded with a simple, yet powerful comment: "No. I mean, not what we're learning. No. Not where we're from. No. Here, no."

## Discussion

The quantitative data gathered in the study indicated that Black students do have positive attitudes toward the study of Spanish and are not less motivated to study the language than their Non-Black peers. This finding represents a significant change from previous related research that indicated that Black students in the United States lack motivation to learn foreign languages in comparison with their peers of other races (Brigman & Jacobs, 1981; Hodges & Welch, 1992; American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, 2007). That

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*Black students do have positive attitudes toward the study of Spanish and are not less motivated to study the language than their Non-Black peers.*

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being said, the survey results suggested that the Black students in the study suffered a significantly greater decrease than did their Non-Black peers in their Motivational Intensity from the beginning to the end of the semester. In other words, the Black students reported a greater decrease in the amount of effort they put forth to learn Spanish than did their counterparts of other races.

In support of previously mentioned research (Clark, 1982; Davis, 1992; Guillaume, 1994), qualitative data collected in the study suggested that lack of cultural relevance may be one reason for the decrease in Motivational Intensity, or effort, to learn Spanish among Black students. Although initially interested in learning the language and eager to work hard, as the semester progressed the Black students struggled to see the relevance of Spanish to their daily lives.

Further evidence of the perceived cultural irrelevance of learning Spanish among Black students was reported in the interviews. While the eight Black students

interviewed were aware of the employment-related benefits of L2 learning, they did not recognize the cultural and communicative benefits of learning Spanish, or at least not to the same extent as did their Non-Black peers. While no significant differences were reported in the survey analysis with respect to Integrative and Instrumental orientations, it is worth noting that only two of the eight Black students interviewed mentioned integrative or communication and cultural reasons for studying Spanish, in comparison with half of the Non-Black students.

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*The notion that Black students in the United States may be less integratively and more instrumentally oriented than their peers could shed some light on why they tend to be under-represented in advanced-level L2 programs.*

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The notion that Black students in the United States may be less integratively and more instrumentally oriented than their peers could shed some light on why they tend to be under-represented in advanced-level L2 programs. In a study by Gardner, Smythe, Clément, and Glikzman (1976), the researchers found integrative orientation to be especially important in L2 classrooms. The researchers reported that students who dropped out of L2 programs often lacked an integrative orientation. These findings were later supported by the work of Clément, Gardner, and Smythe (1980), who suggested that individuals who possess an integrative orientation are more likely to speak with L2 users, which in

turn would improve their self-confidence, and ultimately increase their motivation to learn the L2.

Although the issue of “acting White” was raised in the study by one Spanish teacher as a possible factor behind the lack of Black participation in advanced-level L2 classes, student comments did not lend support to this hypothesis. Similar to the findings of the research conducted by Tyson et al. (2005) involving the under-representation of Black students in advanced placement and honors courses in high school, in the present study there was some evidence to suggest that enrollment in L2 classes and high academic achievement in general is not perceived by Black students as “acting White” per se, but rather as pretending to enjoy a higher socioeconomic status than what is actually the case.

### **Limitations of the Study**

A variety of factors prevent the results of this study from being generalized to all schools and to all Black students. The study was conducted in only one large, inner-city school. Its results may not, therefore, be applicable to all high schools in the United States. The high rate of poverty at the participating school also prevents the study’s results from being generalized. Research has shown that socioeconomics can influence L2 motivation (Carr & Pauwels, 2006). The high rate of poverty among the Black population at the school may have had a negative impact upon the motivation of Black students to study Spanish. Furthermore, the study’s data were collected only in Spanish I classes and from a relatively small sample of students. It is impossible, for example, to make generalizations based on only 16 student interviews. To address these concerns, similar studies should be conducted involving a larger number of students in both urban and rural schools. Future related studies should also involve a variety of levels of Spanish instruction and schools that represent various socioeconomic echelons.

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According to Tyson et al. (2005), the phenomenon of Black students avoiding certain courses for fear of “acting White” is more likely to exist in schools with large populations of both Black and White students and where there are large socioeconomic differences between the two groups. Due to the large population of Black students (approximately 70%) and the high rate of poverty among all racial groups attending the participating school, the researchers in the present study were unable to test this hypothesis.

## Implications and Applications

More needs to be done to maintain and even build upon the interest in learning Spanish that was expressed by the Black students in the study. One way to accomplish this goal is to make L2 learning more culturally relevant. To do so, L2 teachers must teach in a more culturally responsive manner (see Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992). In support of earlier claims made by Guillaume (1994) and Clark (1982) that many Black students are unable to connect L2 learning with their daily lives, Tiffany felt that the Spanish she and her classmates were learning was not relevant to their lives and could not be used in their community. To be more culturally responsive L2 teachers need to depart from

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the topics traditionally found in their introductory level L2 textbooks, often related to domesticity and international travel (Callaghan, 1998), and infuse more culturally relevant topics. For example, had the students been taught common expressions in Spanish used by their Spanish-speaking peers in the neighborhood as opposed to more formal Spanish, perhaps the language would have seemed more applicable to their daily lives. Had the students discussed topics that were more relevant to their lived experiences, perhaps they may have seen Spanish as more meaningful. By making L2 instruction more relevant to the daily lives of their Black students L2 teachers are responding to what Connell and Wellborn (1991) refer to as the students’ need for relatedness. Teachers need to show their students that they belong in the classroom. Discussing relevant and meaningful topics is one way L2 teachers can show their Black students that they do belong in the L2 classroom.

Culturally responsive teaching also includes discussion of the similarities between first and L2 cultures and not just the differences. Although Standard 4.2 of the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (National Standards, 2006) clearly states that students are to explore both similarities and differences between first and L2 cultures, experience supervising and working with L2 teachers for many years has demonstrated to the researchers that L2 teachers often emphasize differences between cultures and tend to neglect all that is similar. While the emphasis on differences may be intriguing to some students, it can lead to stereotypes and to an increase in the social distance between cultures (Schumann, 1976). If L2 teachers were to devote more time and energy to pointing out the similarities between the cultures in the L2 classroom, perhaps the Black students in the study would not have perceived the study of Spanish to be as foreign or as irrelevant to their own personal culture. Highlighting the cultural

similarities that exist between Black students and Spanish-speakers may motivate Black students to learn the L2 for integrative reasons.

To make learning Spanish more culturally relevant and not be viewed as behavior exclusive to White people, Black students must also be exposed to L2 speakers who share their racial and cultural backgrounds. The limited number of teachers of color, particularly in the field of L2 education, must be addressed. As previously mentioned, Moore (2005) found Black students to be significantly under-represented in his L2 teacher certification program. The absence of Black L2 teachers does not come without consequence. It is likely to reinforce the perception among Black students that L2 learning is not culturally relevant which, of course, contributes to the under-representation of Black students in L2 studies. As was made evident in an earlier quote from Tiffany, having a Black Spanish teacher shows Black students that they too can learn the language. Such a realization contributes to a sense of autonomy and competence. Competence and autonomy are two psychological needs that Connell and Wellborn (1991) believe to be crucial in engaging students. Further, seeing models of L2 speakers who share their racial and cultural backgrounds shows Black students that they too can be successful and that they too have control over their success in Spanish class. Given the scarcity of Black teacher-candidates in L2 teacher certification programs, school districts should take greater advantage of such organizations as Visiting International Faculty (VIF) to hire more Black L2 teachers from countries such as the Dominican Republic. Furthermore, school districts, colleges of education, post-secondary L2 departments, and state L2 associations should do more to promote the possibility of a career teaching foreign languages to Black L2 students in high school and university.

In addition to providing more Black Spanish-speaking role models, the importance of studying an L2 must also be emphasized among Black students. As mentioned earlier, Hodges and Welch (1991) reported that many high schools attended by Black students only offer two year L2 programs. Such brief exposure to L2 learning tends to undermine the importance of learning another language and does not adequately prepare students to continue L2 studies at the post-secondary level. A logical step in promoting the study of Spanish and other foreign languages among all young students, including those who are Black, is to offer four-year sequential L2 programs in American high schools.

## Conclusion

The under-representation of Black students in advanced-level L2 classes in the United States has spawned a plethora of research over the past 40 years. While the issue was recently brought to the forefront once again via a survey conducted by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (2007), very little recent research has been conducted on this topic. Furthermore, the majority of the research that has been conducted offered a pessimistic portrayal of the state of motivation among Black students to study foreign languages and suggested inconsistent reasons behind this lack of L2 motivation.

The present study begins to fill this void in the research. Almost 30 years after the study by Brigman and Jacobs (1981) brought to national attention the under-

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representation of Black students in American L2 programs, the present study paints a more optimistic picture. The participating Black students had positive attitudes toward the study of Spanish and thought it to be an important subject in high school.

That being said, the study did reveal evidence to suggest that the perceived lack of cultural relevance among many Black students to study Spanish may be jeopardizing their motivation to pursue learning the language beyond the mandatory years of instruction in high school. As demonstrated in the study, after completing one semester of Spanish some Black students did not see the cultural benefits of learning Spanish and thought the language to be irrelevant and inapplicable to their daily lives. This lack of cultural relevance may explain why the Black students in the study experienced a greater decrease during the semester in the amount of effort they reported to put forth to learn the language than did their Non-Black peers.

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*... the study did reveal evidence to suggest that the perceived lack of cultural relevance among many Black students to study Spanish may be jeopardizing their motivation to pursue learning the language beyond the mandatory years of instruction in high school.*

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In response to such concerns L2 teachers need to adopt a more culturally responsive approach to L2 teaching. Reinforcing the earlier findings of Clark (1982) and Guillaume (1994) and building upon the seminal work of Schumann (1976), the study's results have indicated that L2 teachers, particularly those in urban schools with large Black populations, need to bridge the cultural gap between Black students and the culture of the L2 community. Instead of emphasizing cultural differences between first and L2 cultures, L2 teachers need to draw their students' attention to similarities between cultures. Foreign language teachers should integrate resources and teach L2 concepts and skills that are viewed by both young Black students and their peers as applicable to their daily lives. Furthermore, L2 teachers need ongoing professional development opportunities to learn new strategies and techniques to meet the needs of all of their students, regardless of their race.

The researchers argue that culturally responsive teaching in the L2 classroom also includes providing Black students with role models who speak the L2. Clearly, teachers, university professors, and school administrators must do more to increase the presence of Black L2 teachers in schools.

Were the above-mentioned suggestions to be implemented, fewer Black students may view the study of foreign languages as too irrelevant to pursue. Inclusive and culturally responsive teaching, of course, benefits more than just Black students. As previously mentioned, there is a significant correlation between teacher practices and student engagement (Baskerville, 2008). Teaching practices that address the needs of students are more likely to engage all students, regardless of race. Foreign language teachers must get to know their Black students, just as they must get to know all their other students in order to meet their diverse needs. By doing so, they improve the instruction for all.

The important role played by L2 teachers in engaging their students, draws attention to the previously mentioned work of Connell and Wellborn (1991) that also emphasizes the influence of the teacher in student engagement. Teaching practices

that make learners feel as though they are competent and that they belong and have a voice in the classroom are more likely to engage all students, regardless of skin color (Connell & Wellborn, 1991). Building upon this notion, it could be argued that had the students involved in this study been exposed to culturally responsive, best teaching practices, their motivation may have remained strong throughout the semester.

Admittedly, this study represents only a snapshot of the state of motivation of Black students to learn Spanish at one particular high school. While there are definitely limitations associated with such a narrow view of the issue, the results are nevertheless interesting, worthy of consideration, and represent a starting point for future research into a topic that has been largely ignored over the past 30 years.

To clarify, the researchers underscore that the goal of this study was not to portray Black students as apathetic and unmotivated L2 learners. The researchers have taught, observed, and interacted with highly motivated and successful Black L2 learners at both the K-12 and post-secondary levels. The researchers hope that the findings and suggestions that have emerged from the data will prove useful in opening the doors of L2 classrooms to a more diverse group of students, so that more Black students and students of all races have the opportunity to share in the benefits of language learning.

## Notes

1. According to the 5th edition of the American Psychological Association (2005), the term Black is to be used when describing race. The term Black is used in the study to refer to the participants who self-identified in the survey as Black/African-American.
2. The term Non-Black is used to describe all students who self-identified in the survey as White, Asian, or Other.
3. To protect the anonymity of the student-participants pseudonyms are used.
4. To protect the anonymity of the teacher-participants pseudonyms are used.

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## Appendix

### Motivational Intensity

1. When I am studying in Spanish, I ignore distractions and stay on task.
2. I don't bother trying to understand the complex aspects of Spanish.
3. I really work hard to learn Spanish.
4. I tend to approach my Spanish homework in a random and unplanned manner.
5. I don't pay too much attention to the feedback I get in Spanish class.
6. When I have a problem understanding something we are learning in my Spanish class, I always ask the teacher for help.
7. I tend to give up when a Spanish lesson gets off track.
8. I don't bother checking my corrected assignments in Spanish class.
9. I make a point of trying to understand all the Spanish I see and hear.
10. I keep up to date with Spanish by working on it almost every day.

### Desire

1. I wish I had begun studying Spanish at an early age.
2. Knowing Spanish isn't really an important goal in my life.
3. I wish I were fluent in Spanish.
4. I want to learn Spanish so well that it becomes second nature to me.
5. As I get older, I find I'm losing any desire I had in knowing Spanish.
6. I don't care to learn more than the basics of Spanish.
7. I would like to learn as much Spanish as possible.
8. I sometimes daydream about dropping Spanish.
9. If it were up to me, I would spend all my time learning Spanish.
10. To be honest, I really have little desire to learn Spanish.

### Attitudes toward the L2

1. Learning Spanish is really great.
2. I really enjoy learning Spanish.
3. I hate Spanish.
4. I would rather spend my time on subjects other than Spanish.
5. I plan to learn as much Spanish as possible.
6. Learning Spanish is a waste of time.
7. I love learning Spanish.
8. Spanish is an important part of the school program.
9. I think that learning Spanish is dull.
10. When I leave school, I shall give up the study of Spanish entirely because I am not interested in it.

**Integrative Orientation**

1. Studying Spanish is important to me because it will allow me to be more at ease with people who speak Spanish.
2. Studying Spanish is important to me because it will allow me to meet and speak with diverse people.
3. Studying Spanish is important to me because I will be able to participate more freely in the activities of other cultural groups.
4. Studying Spanish is important to me because it will enable me to understand and better appreciate Spanish art and literature.

**Instrumental Orientation**

1. Studying Spanish is important to me only because I'll need it for my future career.
2. Studying Spanish is important to me because it will make me a more knowledgeable person.
3. Spanish is important because people will respect me more if I have knowledge of a foreign language.
4. Studying Spanish is important to me because it will someday be useful in getting a good job.

**Teacher Evaluation**

1. My Spanish teacher is friendly.
2. My Spanish teacher is sincere.
3. I think my Spanish teacher is polite.
4. My Spanish teacher is good at his/her job.
5. My Spanish teacher is a pleasant person.
6. My Spanish teacher is considerate of student feelings.
7. My Spanish teacher is dependable.
8. I think my Spanish teacher is reliable.
9. My Spanish teacher runs the classroom very efficiently.
10. My Spanish teacher is cheerful.

**Course Evaluation**

1. My Spanish class is good.
2. I enjoy my Spanish class.
3. My Spanish class is awful.
4. I find my Spanish class to be unpleasant.
5. My Spanish class is of little value to me.
6. My Spanish class is really rewarding.
7. I find my Spanish class to be satisfying.
8. My Spanish class is not appealing to me.
9. My Spanish class is painful.
10. My Spanish class is agreeable to me.

**Teacher Competence**

1. My Spanish teacher is a well-organized person.
2. My Spanish teacher is a capable teacher.

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3. My Spanish teacher is intelligent.
4. I feel that my Spanish teacher is a competent teacher.
5. My Spanish teacher is very industrious (hard-working).



## Using semantic maps and word families in the beginning-level middle school foreign language classroom

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Douglas W. Mast, *Manheim Township (PA) Middle School*

### Abstract

This article describes the importance of vocabulary learning strategies. The paper describes several methods for making vocabulary learning more effective for young adolescents during the early stages of foreign language study.

A quick review of the current status of foreign language (FL) vocabulary research on middle-school-age learners is examined. Numerous studies imply that this age group has often been neglected in the research even though they are both cognitively and linguistically prepared to apply more depth-of-processing strategies to facilitate their learning of words in the target language.

The theoretical basis for vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) is first considered, followed by practical suggestions on how two strategies — semantic mapping and word families — can be used effectively in the FL classroom.

Over the past two decades, the importance of vocabulary during the preliminary stages of foreign language learning has received much attention. Closely aligned with this research has been an almost parallel interest in the role that vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) play in facilitating acquisition of second language (L2) vocabulary (Daller, Milton, & Treffers-Daller, 2007; DeGroot & Van Hell, 2006). Studies related to vocabulary learning and strategies indicate that foreign language learners achieve greater success in acquiring new words in a lexically rich environment, and that

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**Douglas W. Mast** (Ph.D., Temple University) is a middle and high school Spanish teacher at Manheim Township Middle School, Lancaster, PA. He has taught middle school, high school (levels one–AP) and has taught Spanish-related courses as an Adjunct Professor at Harrisburg Area Community College, Lancaster, PA, and at Immaculata University, Philadelphia, PA.

instruction and implementation of vocabulary strategies should include a combination of contextual and isolated word learning formats (Anton & Lantolf, 2004; Nation, 2001; Schmitt, 2000).

While much of the research related to vocabulary learning strategies has provided FL instructors with a wealth of beneficial information, the bulk of this research has tended to focus specifically on strategy use for older adolescents and mature adults. In contrast, research conducted on younger adolescents between 12-14 years of age — generally associated with middle school students — is surprisingly lacking in the literature (Met, 1994). One of the premises and limitations of researching young adolescents, according to Govea de Arce (2001), is the perceived difficulty these students have in expressing the mental processes involved in language learning. In other words, younger adolescents tend more toward interaction with peers and toward asking clarification questions when faced with difficulties rather than repeating the language under their breath or arranging newly learned materials into an organized manner. Govea de Arce’s study of strategy use among middle school-aged FL learners verified this premise in that there was an observable greater reliance by participants on their peers to complete the assigned target language tasks as compared to a more limited use of mnemonics or of graphic organizers. Although the participants were more prone to utilize rote memory and rehearsal strategies when assigned new target language vocabulary, Govea de Arce theorizes that deeper level cognitive processing strategies can be an essential component for FL learning. This reasoning is based on

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*... these  
[middle-school  
FL] learners have  
already developed  
rich conceptual and  
semantic systems  
linked to their native  
language.*

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the premise that the results obtained in her research were demonstrative of what strategies were already being used without any teacher intervention.

Unfortunately, what is overlooked in this discussion is that these learners have already developed rich conceptual and semantic systems linked to their native language. These systems provide them greater facility to map new FL vocabulary word forms onto English conceptual meanings, and consequently they are quite capable of carrying out sophisticated learning and memory-based strategies to engage in learning tasks (Ellis,

2001; Kuhn, 2006; Wormeli, 2004).

New word learning is a gradual and incremental process requiring multiple exposures to the same word in a variety of contexts and collocations for acquisition to occur (Gass & Selinker, 2008). In this article two basic strategies are reviewed as well as two other methods that can facilitate the presentation of effective vocabulary instruction for younger adolescents. The two strategies reviewed are semantic maps and word families; additional methods include word walls and concept maps.

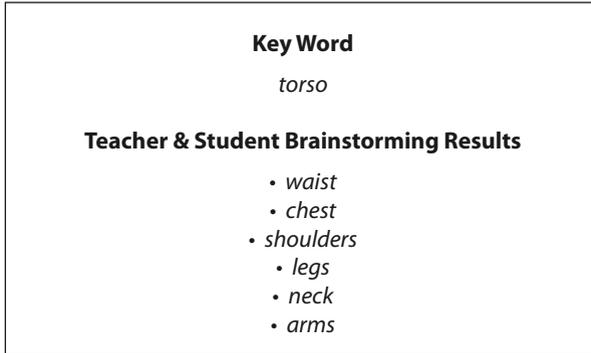
## Semantic maps

Semantic mapping has been defined as providing “a brainstorming association that a word has with other words and then diagramming the results onto a visual model” (Sökmen, 2001). It is a means to “visually integrate new words with old words while promoting deeper levels of processing” (Stoller & Grabe, 1993). Stahl (2005) suggests that semantic maps be introduced as a two-part process. First, begin with the instructor

## Using Semantic Maps and Word Families

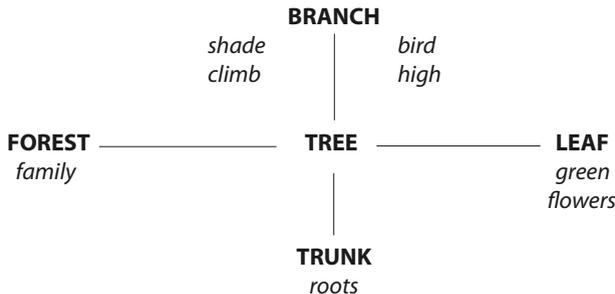
asking students to provide any given number of words related to a given topic, idea, phrase, or key word. Students and teacher then map out the connection between the ideas and words, which in turn supplies a visual framework of the interconnectedness between the selected items. (See Example 1)

### Example 1. Teacher & Student Brainstorming Results of the Key Word *torso*



Ur (2006) suggests that the teacher select a key word, phrase, or idea for further elaboration. The word can be written on the board. Students then work individually, in pairs, or as a larger group to brainstorm other words, ideas, or phrases related to their own experiences or previous knowledge. For example, a word such as tree can lead to other associative related terms such as roots, trunk, high, family, leaf, forest, bird, green, climb, branch, shade, and flowers. These words can then be arranged into a “sun-ray” diagram so that the main key word tree becomes the focused term surrounded by its related vocabulary. Another diagram for displaying words associated with a key word is found in Zaid (1995). In his model associative vocabulary is organized into different categories to supply a visual demonstration of their interrelatedness and connections. After students have corroborated their individual or group diagrams, further discussion and focus on other key words or phrases can take place. An example of this model is found in Example 2.

### Example 2. Associative vocabulary categorized with the key word *tree*



While these skill-getting activities generally lead to logical skill-using activities of greater fluency in discussions of word associations, their use should not be viewed as an end in itself. Instead, occasional employment of these types of strategies will facilitate student awareness of target language word families and aid in reinforcing the interrelatedness between words in a variety of contexts.

**Word Families**

Another strategy that shares some commonality with semantic mapping incorporates grouping words into their semantic categories so that the focus is on the affinity the words share in their roots and suffixes. This involves a morphological analysis of individual word parts. For example, familiarity with the word mend can lead to learning other forms and meanings associated with it: mends, mended, mending, mender, mendable, and unmendable (Nation, 2001). One method used to introduce this approach is word families. Word families are words built around a particular root, base, or headword that are then linked together to establish associations and general meanings among them. According to Nation (2001) knowing some of the common affixes and stems of words can lessen the learning burden of new word learning. Returning to the example mentioned above, once knowledge of the word mend has been acquired, learning the derivational associates linked to it becomes a much easier task because of their common, familial association. Much attention has been given this category of vocabulary enhancement as it has been linked to increasing a learner’s vocabulary in both the L1 and L2. Research suggests that students be given instruction in both inflectional and derivational affixes to enhance their learning of new L2 vocabulary (Laufer, 2001). Inflectional affixes provide an extension or a change in the root and supply information as to gender, number, person, and tense. For example, when the suffix [s] is added to the verb “eat” it supplies the grammatical categories of number (singular) and person (third person).

Derivational affixes on the other hand form new words that are semantically related to the base but form a different word often of a different syntactic category. These lexical forms belong to a single family of words and do not represent different words when considering estimates of vocabulary size (Grabe & Stoller, 2000). An example of this is found in the word inactivity which occurs less than once in every hundred million words of school text, yet its relation to higher frequency words such as active, activity, and activities increases its frequency substantially making it easier to be assessed as a member of a word family rather than assessed as an individual word (Nagy, Anderson, Schommer, Scott, & Stallman, 1989).

Schmitt and Zimmerman (2002) argue that word families maximize vocabulary learning in comparison to the simple introduction of individual words and their meanings. In addition, explicit instruction utilizing word families introduces learners to other members of a word’s family that can enhance vocabulary growth and establish a habit on the part of the learner to view a word’s derivatives as a matter of course (Schmitt, 2000). A visual diagram of this strategy could include a word map as suggested by Sökmen (2001). Using a target language

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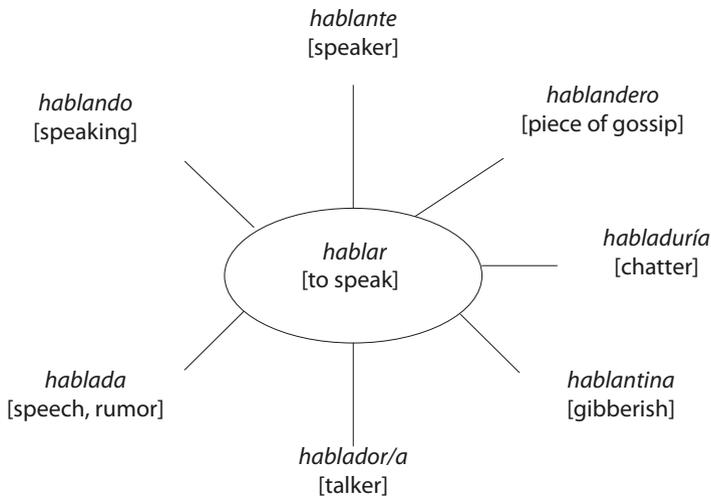
... word families maximize vocabulary learning in comparison to the simple introduction of individual words and their meanings.

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## Using Semantic Maps and Word Families

dictionary, students find words that share the same stem or root and write them out on the map. Words are written in clusters around the main base or headword. An example of a word family is found in the derivations of the Spanish verb *hablar* [to speak]. The base word *habl-* can form other words by adding such suffixes as *-ador* which yields the noun *hablador* [talker], or *-ante* to produce the adjective *hablante* [speaker]. A diagram of some of the derivatives of the verb *hablar* is displayed in Example 3 below.

**Example 3.** Word Map of the verb *hablar* [to speak]



An elaboration of the strategies related to semantic mapping or word maps could include word walls (Marzano, 2004). Word walls are a student-created mural with either assigned or associative target language vocabulary (e.g., family members, food items). Students make pictures to depict the items they have selected and include them on the mural. The mural can then be hung up in the classroom or hallway for further reflection and reinforcement.

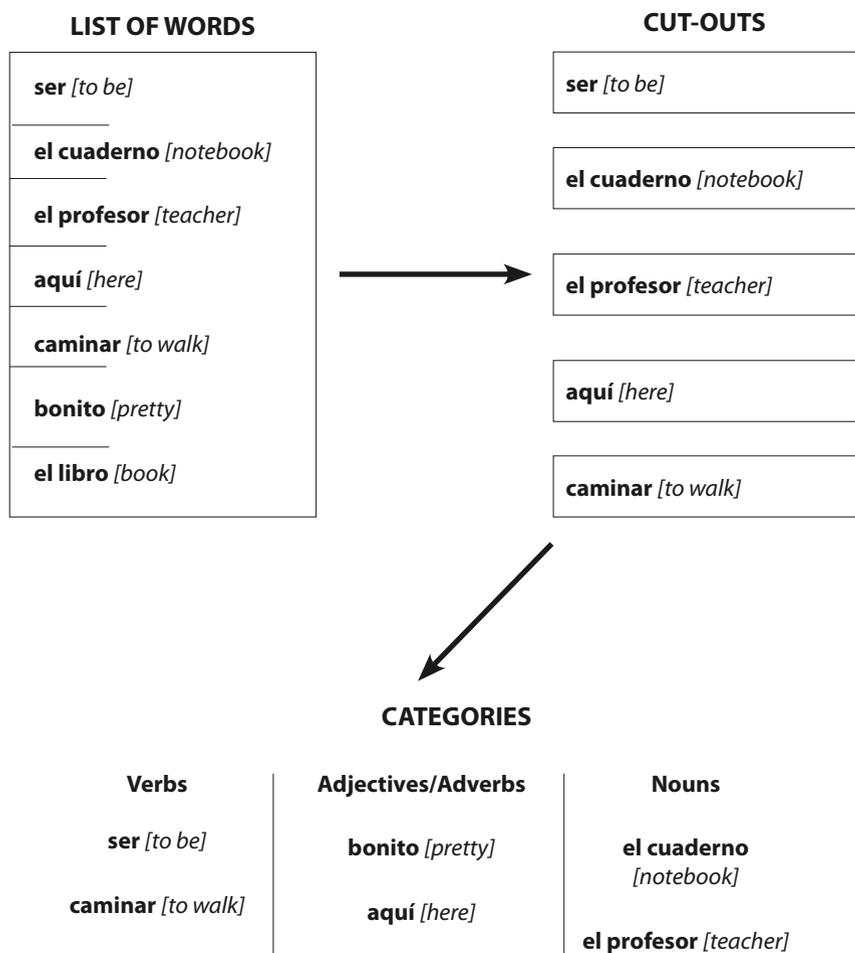
In addition, Saz (1996) suggests a concept map, which is a variation of the word map suggested by Sökmen. Students are given a list of target language words (nouns, verbs, adjectives) that they are to cut out individually. Once they have cut out the words, on a separate sheet of paper, students assemble the words into any given number of categories and classifications and share their results with the class. (See Example 4 on the following page.)

## Conclusion

The literature on the use of vocabulary learning strategies in vocabulary acquisition during the beginning stages of FL learning is a subject of considerable interest. Although this article has focused more on the needs of younger adolescents, the methods and strategies reviewed will also work for high school-aged students since there is no compelling research suggesting differences in brain functioning between middle school and high school FL learners. While the use of semantic mapping and

word families is certainly not a new concept in the field, their use in the FL classroom at an early stage of language learning can facilitate greater word recognition in a variety of contextually-based classroom assignments and activities. As students become more adept at using these methods, they can utilize and combine them with other preferred strategies in order to become more proficient L2 word learners.

**Example 4.** Concept Map Cut-Outs & Categories



## Using Semantic Maps and Word Families

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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, webmasters, 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

Lahlali, El Mustapha. *Advanced Media Arabic*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2008. Includes an audio file available on a specially created Website. ISBN: 978-1-58901-220-2. \$34.95.

*Advanced Media Arabic* is an engaging text that seeks to hone advanced reading, listening and interpretation skills through the study of authentic news items on some of the most relevant topics in the Arab world today. As such, it aims to develop not only linguistic skills, but contemporary cultural literacy as well. The text targets advanced college Arabic students, who will find it challenging, but is also useful for professional translators. As the title implies, this is not a basic introduction to Arabic media, but rather targets a higher level of reading and analysis. The chapters feature extensive reading and writing exercises based primarily on newspaper articles, with supplemental listening exercises based on audio files available for free on an accompanying Website.

The textbook is divided into ten thematic modules, each related to current events: diplomacy, elections, trade and industry, violence and disorder, law and order, economy, war and military action, natural disasters, terrorism, and Arabic television and talk shows. This thematic approach will be of great use for course developers, since they can focus on topics of specific interest to their students. The modules are further divided into a total of 36 units, each featuring a written newspaper article or MP3 audio file featuring a news report. Exercises feature reading comprehension, fill-in-the-blank and matching vocabulary, and construction of sentences and paragraphs. Of particular use to translation specialists, the text features extensive translation exercises into Arabic and English, as well as innovative editing exercises, for example, correcting errors in sample sentences. Unlike many Arabic texts, the book includes answer keys and transcripts of the audio files. The majority of questions are in Arabic, except where translation is the focus.

The text is particularly strong in explaining both the distinctive language of Arabic media and current political and economic discourse. For example, the module on terrorism is rich in Arabic translations of the post-9/11 “War on Terror” terminology. Such knowledge is indispensable for anyone planning to use authentic Arabic news sources for research, translation, or analysis. Political and military terminology is a naturally controversial subject that provides a springboard for classroom discussion or research on differing perceptions of current events. Although the book does not delve extensively into the nuances of terminology, the material offers a rich resource for a teacher to stimulate such discussion. The “invasion of Iraq,” for example, is translated by the articles as “the occupation of Iraq,” while some groups labeled as “terrorist” in the American press are here called “resistance” organizations. This treatment is not only an accurate sampling of the mainstream Arabic press; it also gives a creative teacher material for many very productive classroom discussions. Thus, while the text draws heavily on three mainstream news outlets—BBC, al-Jazeera, and al-Sharq al-Awsat (and al-Hayat)—it will nonetheless challenge the perceptions of most American students with controversial articles such as “The War on Terror Loses its Clarity of Direction” and “Iraq War Allies Reject [Kofi] Annan’s Criticism of the Occupation.”

The only possible concern for educators or students is the level of Arabic required. Among the Arabic media books on the market, *Advanced Media Arabic* falls toward the higher end. As the title indicates, a basic Arabic media vocabulary is a necessary prerequisite. The articles tend to be fairly long and are of a level of difficulty greater than a front-page newspaper story but less than an editorial. Fourth-year students will likely be challenged by the text, yet will find it rewarding. Lower-level students may find it too difficult. Nonetheless, the text is well packaged and organized, exceptionally user-friendly for teachers and students, and quite attractive thanks to its focus on contemporary issues.

David F. DiMeo  
Academy Professor of Arabic  
United States Military Academy  
West Point, New York

Brustad, Kristen, Mahmoud Al-Batal, and Abbas Al-Tonsi. *Alif Baa: Introduction to Arabic Letters and Sounds*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2010. Includes: book, DVD, and companion Website. ISBN: 978-1-58901-705-4 (Teacher’s Edition); 978-1-58901-632-3 (Student Edition). Pp. 252.

*Alif Baa* has long been the definitive text for teaching the Arabic alphabet and sound system, and the new Third Edition brings an expanded pool of resources for teachers and learners. Designed as the first stage in the complete undergraduate *al-Kitaab* series, the package can easily be used by itself to teach the Arabic alphabet as an introduction to any Arabic study program or independent study. With an impressive set of audio and video materials and extensive array of writing and listening exercises, the package needs no supplements. Indeed, teachers will have to be judicious in deciding how much of the material to include in their courses. The Teacher’s Edition

gives detailed suggestions on how to build a course around the text, and expanded notes throughout give guidance on how to use each feature of the text.

The text is organized into ten units: the first introduces general characteristics of the Arabic language, the next seven each present four or five new letters, and the last two concentrate on the definite article and additional diacritical marks. Although the focus is clearly on the Arabic alphabet, the authors have included some two hundred vocabulary items, as part of each unit's cultural/vocabulary lesson centered on common tasks: greetings, taking leave, expressing desire, and forms of address, for example. The package introduces and addresses the diglossic nature of Arabic throughout, distinguishing pronunciation and vocabulary in Standard Arabic, Egyptian, and Levantine colloquial. The cultural lessons, in fact, feature video dialogues recorded in Egyptian and Levantine dialect and are a tremendous improvement over videos in the original *Alif Baa*.

The Arabic script, of course, can be one of the most intimidating features of the language and often deters some would-be learners from studying Arabic in the first place. *Alif Baa* is designed from start to finish to dispel this fear. The authors assume no prior knowledge of Arabic, presenting Arabic pronunciation in simple layman's terms that make it accessible to any student. Moreover, a variety of methods present Arabic sounds and letters to new learners from several perspectives: audio files of sounds in isolation and used in words, often featuring several regional pronunciations; close-up video of native speakers' mouths forming the sounds; and written descriptions and comparisons to familiar sounds in English. As Arabic teachers know, the variety of methods is a great help in reaching students with different learning styles.

The sequencing of activities, which has been validated by two prior editions, presents each letter in a logical and manageable way. The letter *baa*, for example, receives five pages of coverage, first being introduced with the simple explanation that it sounds like the letter *b* in English. The letter is then shown clearly in written form, in isolation, and henceforth in bold red print in real words. Accompanying audio files allow students to hear each sample word and easily distinguish where the *b* sound fits. Students are then offered a video of a skilled calligrapher drawing the letter in all its forms, enabling students to see the hand positions and movements, along with written diagrams using arrows to explain the writing pattern, giving students both a conceptual and a practical visual image. The book includes generous space for students to practice copying the letter in isolation and then in simple words. Once students have learned all the letters in the unit, they are given several listening and writing drills to practice identifying and producing the letters. The net effect of this approach is to demystify this first step of learning Arabic and build student confidence at the earliest stage.

This edition also includes the use of a transliteration system to enable students to acquire Arabic vocabulary before they have finished studying the entire alphabet. Many teachers may find this an unwelcome feature, however, since transliteration can become a crutch that students cling to long after they should have transitioned fully to the Arabic script. Indeed, the existence of a text like *Alif Baa* presupposes the importance of learning the Arabic alphabet first and then relying solely on that writing system. A particularly useful teaching resource is the large number of authentic photographs of Arabic street signs, advertisements, and even simple calligraphy, showing students to

see how the script is used in practice. The book has an accompanying Website, with the same contents as the DVD, to give teachers and students two methods of accessing the material.

*Alif Baa's* greatest strength, however, is also its main drawback. The large volume of information and features may be overwhelming for some Arabic courses or independent learners. Course directors must be careful in deciding how much to include in their programs. The authors recommend a total of 22 classroom hours and 50 out-of-class hours, which may be impractical for programs shorter than the three-to-four year *al-Kitaab* curriculum. Indeed, some of the material, such as the less frequently used diacritical marks, are not of immediate concern to beginners. Lastly, at \$59.95, the book is a significant investment, as less detailed books do an adequate job of introducing the Arabic script for under \$20.

In short, *Alif Baa* remains a most robust resource for introducing the Arabic script. It offers a very solid point of entry to the study of the Arabic language. Teachers should carefully evaluate how many of the text's rich features they will actually need and how best to incorporate them into their classroom.

David F. DiMeo  
Academy Professor of Arabic  
United States Military Academy  
West Point, New York

## Chinese

Liu, Yuehua, Tao-chung Yao, Nyan-Ping Bi, Liangyan Ge, and Yaohua Shi. *Integrated Chinese: Level 1 – Part 1*. Boston: Cheng & Tsui Company. Includes textbook, workbook, character workbook, DVD, and CDs. ISBN: 978-0-88727-638-5. \$35.79.

Since its first publication in 1997, *Integrated Chinese* has been updated through peer review as well as student and instructor comments and suggestions. *Integrated Chinese: Level 1 – Part 1* is designed as an introductory textbook for English speakers who want to learn Mandarin and is thoroughly grounded in ACTFL's conceptualization of the three modes of communication. Now in its third edition, the text includes more authentic materials, new illustrations, contextualized grammar activities, task-oriented assignments, learner-centered tasks, and a cumulative review unit every five lessons

Throughout the text several hundred Chinese characters are introduced and students embark upon simple, graded activities on important topics such as greetings, dates and time, shopping, and family. *Pinyin*, the official system used to transcribe Chinese characters, accompanies Chinese characters throughout the text, which allows students to concentrate on speaking and pronunciation as well as character recognition

Each of the ten lessons (chapters) contains an introductory dialogue to familiarize learners with various speaking scenarios. The exercises reflect these situational conversations. At the end of each lesson, readers are presented with *Culture Highlights*, which are readings aimed at increasing learners' cultural awareness of each topic. Lessons conclude with a list of the vocabulary used in the chapter highlighting phonological indications and English translations. Lesson 1 introduces the exchange of greetings. Basic phrases such as “*Ni hao*” (how are you), “*Wo xing/ Wo jiao*” (“My

name is”), “*Wo shi*” (“I am”), “*Ni shi*” (“you are”), and “*Wo/ni bu shi*” (“I/you am/are not”) are presented and students are given opportunities to practice in a contextualized and personal manner. Subject + Verb + Object syntax structure is noted in Lesson 1 to make learners aware of basic grammar rules. In addition to practicing basic greetings, there are pronunciation exercises in which students can strengthen phonological knowledge of the language. Lesson 2 addresses the topic of family where learners are presented with vocabulary such as “mother” (“*ma ma*”), “father” (“*ba ba*”), “sister” (“*jie jie*”), and “brother” (“*ge ge*”). Unlike other textbooks teaching Chinese, numbers are not presented early in this text; however, the authors choose to focus on ideas such as expressing concepts like there is/are as well as the verb to have. Building on the knowledge acquired in Lesson 1, learners are taught to form questions focusing on the interrogatives for “who” (“*shei*”) and “where” (“*na*”).

In Lesson 3 learners begin to use numbers, time, and dates. Lessons 4 through 6 discuss such topics as hobbies, visiting friends, and making appointments. In Lesson 5, a very important particle, “*le*,” is presented and explained. Lessons 7 and 8 focus on the students’ lives at school where students continue to learn new words, phrases, and expressions specifically geared toward the classroom and school. The textbook concludes with the topics of shopping (Lesson 9) and transportation (Lesson 10).

Accompanying the textbook are a workbook, a character workbook, several audio CDs, and a DVD. The contents of the DVD were filmed in China and feature both native and non-native speakers of Chinese. Complementing the Culture Highlights found in the text, Culture Minutes features an American native speaker of English who speaks Chinese guiding students through the busy streets of Beijing. Conversation topics with local people include greetings, families, time, hobbies, and shopping, to name a few. The strengths of this textbook are manifold. The grammar is explained clearly in English and the practice exercises are contextualized. The text and its ancillaries are filled with cultural topics that enhance learning. The speaking exercises focus first on the dialogues so that learners can gain confidence using the language, and only then become more personal by inviting learners to use Mandarin in the context of their own lives. Even so, it is important for those interested in learning Chinese to remember that Mandarin phonology is rather complex and that learners must remain patient while mastering its many nuances.

Qingzheng Wang  
Ph.D. Candidate  
Georgia State University  
Atlanta, GA

### Education

Rothstein, Richard, Rebecca Jacobsen, and Tamara Wilder. *Grading Education: Getting Accountability Right*. Washington, DC and New York, NY: Economic Policy Institute and Teachers College Press, 2008. ISBN: 1-932066-36-5.

The central premise of this book is that U.S. taxpayers and their elected officials should hold public schools and other government-funded centers of youth development

accountable for achieving educational outcomes that reflect a national consensus of broad priorities extending well beyond the current narrow focus on improvement of test scores on standardized math and reading exams.

The authors' review of educational policies since the eighteenth century and a recent survey of representative samples of adults from the general public, school boards, and state legislatures demonstrate that these broad national priorities have historically included and include to this day: (1) basic academic skills (specifically in reading, writing, and math) and basic knowledge of science and history, (2) critical thinking and problem solving skills, (3) arts and literature appreciation, (4) preparation for skilled employment, (5) social skills and work ethic, (6) citizenship and community responsibility, (7) physical health, and (8) emotional health. While these goal areas have existed for centuries, the degree of concern for each area has fluctuated over time and across political parties. Consistently included among these national priorities is foreign language learning, now left implicit rather than explicit in the authors' stated goal areas.

The members of the general public, school board members, and state legislators surveyed were in close accord regarding the relative importance of the above eight goal areas. All eight areas were deemed essential, and the traditionally "academic" categories of basic knowledge and skills, critical thinking, appreciation of the arts and literature, and preparation for skilled work were rated as only slightly more important than the goals of citizenship, character, and health. These results reflect public interest in a broader accountability focus in our public schools. With President Obama's 2010 blueprint for a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the tide is indeed shifting to a broader focus on preparing students for college and meaningful careers and rewarding schools for progress, as opposed to the current narrow emphasis on getting all students to surpass cut-off scores in math and reading at each grade level and punishing schools in which that narrow goal is not met.

We see in this book that while the current version of the ESEA, "No Child Left Behind," advocates for only the first two of the goal areas listed above (basic knowledge and skills in reading, writing, math, science, and history, and critical thinking and problem solving) and furthermore only narrowly tests a small portion of the first one, the national definition has not always been so narrow. In fact, the original National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) evaluated a broad range of cognitive and behavioral knowledge and skills, both in and out of school and across multiple measures.

The authors argue that the narrowing of the accountability system over time has resulted from efforts to "do accountability on the cheap," forcing comprehensive and meaningful assessment to take a back seat to a focus on educational outcomes that are easy and inexpensive to measure. The resulting "dangerous narrowing of the curriculum" has corrupted the educational process: schools have begun to focus only on what was rewarded, namely improved test scores for children who hadn't met a "proficiency" cut-off score that is, incredibly, both the minimum standard and the uppermost goal. Consequently, students perceived as either already proficient or incapable of achieving the cut-off score have been neglected as teaching resources have been disproportionately expended on those students just below the proficiency cut-off score.

The authors employ various examples from different fields in our country and abroad to illustrate that equating accountability solely with numerical outcomes is a recipe for disaster when assessing social processes. Something may be easy to precisely measure, but that doesn't mean it is important to measure; and while intense focus on a specific area to the neglect of others might result in improvement in the area of focus, it will most certainly result in harm to the other areas.

All of the above supports the authors' claim that not only has our current narrow, test-based accountability system failed to improve American education, but it has actually harmed it. The logical question, then, is what is the best alternative? The authors argue for a system that would be federally funded but administered at the state level, where there is more vested interest and less chance of ideological polarization. It would combine the best elements of standardized testing, the goals and procedures of the early NAEP, the basic framework of the current school accreditation process (but for all schools rather than only member schools), a focus on student achievement rather than on the quality of programs and resources, and elements of more balanced inspection systems in other nations. The federal government would hold schools accountable for the eight goal areas listed above, but the U.S. taxpayers and their elected state officials would determine the relative weight of each priority.

The essential components of such a system would include national goals that encompass both cognitive and behavioral knowledge and skills, the collection of and publication of disaggregated comparative data, the use of both objective and subjective evaluative tools (including pencil-and-paper tests, performances, interviews, and on-site observations by trained education professionals), and multiple re-tests to ensure accuracy. The use of multiple measures and a more balanced evaluation would lower the stakes and increase the validity of each assessment, as well as decrease the motivation for and ability of schools to "game" the system by teaching to the test, falsifying students' answer sheets, or arranging for less proficient students to be absent on standardized testing days.

The role of the federal government would be to provide more aid to "low-wealth states" and to use a modified and expanded NAEP similar to the original to gather valid and reliable data on student performance at the state level. This would allow comparison across states and help determine how to raise the achievement of students in one state to the level of similar students in another state with comparable resources. Each state would continually assess and foster student achievement in all eight of the goal areas listed above, supplementing information from standardized tests and the modified NAEP with evaluations by trained experts in a process similar to school accreditation or England's rigorous inspection system, as it was before changes were made in 2005 due to budgetary restrictions.

Reflecting the enormous importance of funding, the authors conclude this persuasive book, which should be read by all U.S. taxpayers, parents, educators, and legislators, with rough estimates of the cost of their proposed accountability system. While it would be more expensive than the current system, they state that it would still only cost approximately 1% of our current national total spending on elementary and secondary education. Most importantly, they cogently argue, such a system would provide more meaningful accountability data and a more comprehensive and effective

education for our youth. The challenge to foreign language educators and advocates is to ensure that foreign language education is included, by educating policy makers and the general public about the Standards for Foreign Language Learning framework and its direct implications for progress in multiple areas of national priority.

Charla Lorenzen  
 Assistant Professor of Modern Languages  
 Elizabethtown College  
 Elizabethtown, PA  
 Ph.D. Candidate  
 Georgia State University  
 Atlanta, GA

### French

Ghillebaert, Françoise. *Face-à-Face: Conversation et Rédaction*. Boston: Vista Higher Learning, 2011. Includes Film Collection DVD with passcodes to Instructor and Student Supersites. ISBN: 978-1-60576-122-0.

*Face-à-face* is a new, one-semester college-level advanced conversation and composition textbook that integrates a wealth of engaging text, technology, and media resources. The author's expertise in second language learning and French is evident in the text's use of authentic films, literary and cultural readings, writing assignments, and technology, which serve to spark learner interest in developing French conversational skills. The current and captivating topics covered in this program are not only appealing but, more importantly, place students in real-life contexts.

The textbook is divided into six theme-based lessons: personal relationships (*les relations personnelles*), media and technology (*les médias et la technologie*), family (*les générations*), travel and modes of transportation (*les voyages et transports*), nature and the environment (*la nature et l'environnement*), and society (*la société*). Each lesson is divided into six sections. The first section, *Court Métrage*, features short films by contemporary French and Francophone filmmakers and exposes students to different French accents. These films are introduced by pre-viewing activities where background information is provided with a list of vocabulary to aid comprehension and stimulate interest. Photos from the scenes in the films are used along with cultural notes explaining the film's historical context. Afterward, there are post-viewing expansion activities. The choice of short films (5-15 minutes) is excellent, and their diversity exposes students to both French and Francophone culture. The second section, *Structures*, presents grammar reviews, which are illustrated using expressions from the short movies and reinforced by directed exercises and open-ended communicative activities. The grammar is presented in a clear and concise manner accompanied by thoughtful exercises to allow students to practice using it with both language production skills. In the Lectures section, there are pre-reading activities for each of the two selected readings as well as a brief biography of each author, vocabulary lists, a glossary, and post-reading and expansion activities. Additionally, students have access to a dramatic reading on the online Supersite for one of the chapter's selections. The fourth section, *Bande Dessinée*, features comic strips based on the theme of the lesson that include

both French and Francophone authors. Biographies of each author are included as well as group activities where students reflect on important aspects and context of the comic strips on both a personal and universal level. Cartoons not only serve to stimulate thematic dialogue among learners and instructors; they are also a sensational medium to introduce students to the idea of humor in selected French and certain Francophone cultures. The *Rédaction* section provides students with the opportunity to express themselves through writing activities on the lesson's topic. Following best practices in language learning, the writing tasks are divided into pre-writing, writing, and post-writing activities to guide students through the writing process. The final section, *Conversation*, seeks to develop the learners' communicative competence by stimulating debates and discussion on the lesson topics.

The instructor edition is accompanied by a film collection on DVD and a passcode to the Instructor Supersite, which supports instructors and students with a plethora of online resources that include lesson plans, textbook audio in the popular MP3 format, the film collection that uses streaming video, film scripts, a complete password-protected testing program, a grade book, and a digital course management system. The student package includes a textbook with access to a Student Supersite, which contains a Web-Sam online workbook that delivers all student activity manuals in an online format, and a wide variety of resources such as auto-graded practice activities with immediate feedback, auto-graded practice quizzes, record-submit oral assessments, writing activities, recorded vocabulary lists, six dramatic audio recordings of the text's readings, textbook audio MP3s, the entire film collection with subtitles in French and English, film scripts, an Oxford French mini-dictionary, and a Voice Board powered by Wimba for threaded discussions and announcements. As an added feature, instructors have complete access to the Student Supersite, which serves to facilitate student learning. Both Supersites are well designed and user-friendly. With a series of clicks, students can access all the supporting material needed without worrying about lost CDs or workbooks. An especially interesting feature of this French program is that there is a Voice Board where students and instructors can meet digitally to enhance learning.

Overall, *Face-à-Face* provides a fresh, well-balanced approach where equal importance is given to various language learning skills juxtaposed with authentic literature and cultural texts to help students develop communicative skills in the French language as well as an understanding and appreciation of the Francophone world. The textbook and ancillaries offer learners authentic and contextualized scenarios that stimulate interest beyond the classroom while using digital media that interest today's technologically literate students.

Paul Yao  
Graduate Teaching Assistant  
Department of Modern and Classical Languages  
Georgia State University  
Atlanta, GA

## Publisher's Response

Vista Higher Learning proudly acknowledges the complimentary review of *Face-à-face* presented by Professor Paul Yao. As a specialized publisher dedicated to the field of foreign language teaching and learning, we put great care and effort into every individual title that we publish. We are very pleased to be actively publishing exciting, technology-rich materials in French as well as in Spanish, Italian, and German and welcome input from any and all instructors teaching with any of our programs.

Deborah Coffey  
 Managing Editor  
 Vista Higher Learning

Booth, Trudie M. *Practice Makes Perfect: French Verb Tenses*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2008. ISBN: 978-0-07-147894-6. For ordering information please visit the McGraw-Hill Professional Publishing Website, [mhprofessional.com](http://mhprofessional.com).

Kurbegov, Eliane. *Practice Makes Perfect: Sentence Builder*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2009. ISBN: 978-0-07-160037-8. For ordering information, please visit [mhprofessional.com](http://mhprofessional.com).

McGraw-Hill has recently published its first edition of two new workbooks to add to their Practice Makes Perfect French language series, *French Verb Tenses* by Trudie Maria Booth, and *French Sentence Builder* by Eliane Kurbegov. These workbooks are designed to be used as a supplemental language tool for beginning, intermediate, and advanced level learners. They would also be useful as a reference tool for both French teachers and students. The workbooks are sold separately but complement one another well and are reasonably priced at \$11.95 for *French Sentence Builder* and \$12.95 for *French Verb Tenses*.

*French Verb Tenses* begins with a review of grammatical terminology for verbs as well as a small introductory section on French pronunciation. The workbook unit consists of 15 chapters, which are further divided into four sections based on verb tenses: (1) the present, (2) the past, (3) the future, the conditional, and the subjunctive, and (4) the infinitive, the imperative, the present participle and gerund, and the passive voice. In Section I, which includes Chapters 1-4, the present tense is broken down into regular and irregular verbs, impersonal verbs, and reflexive verbs. Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8 make up section II and are devoted to past tenses, which cover the *passé composé*, the imperfect tense, the pluperfect tense, and the *passé simple*. Section III, (Chapters 9-11), examines the formation and uses of each tense, as does the fourth section, which includes Chapters 12-15. Following the 15 chapters are two appendices where the authors discuss numbers, date and time formations, and verb tables. There are also French-English and English-French glossaries.

Each chapter uses a consistent format where the presentation of a grammatical lesson is followed by multiple exercises to apply the newly acquired knowledge. The exercises range from fill-in-the-blank and true/false to translation and sentence completion. The lessons are intuitive, and the examples given to illustrate each point are straightforward. There is an abundance of opportunities for learners to use French

in context, and each lesson builds on the previous lesson(s). The rich variety of types of exercises allows learners to apply their knowledge more comprehensively.

*French Sentence Builder* is designed to advance student understanding of French grammar and syntax in part by comparing sentences in English and French. There are 20 chapters that cover more than 100 skill-building exercises on topics such as independent and dependent clauses in the indicative mood, dependent clauses in the subjunctive mood, relative clauses, special uses of pronouns, the use of adverbs and adverbial phrases as well as prepositions and prepositional phrases, making transitions, letter writing and messaging, and the use of colloquial expressions. Within each chapter the author provides exercises that use translation, matching, and sentence completion to promote learners' depth of knowledge of the appropriate uses of grammar and syntax. The lessons are presented in English in order to accommodate students regardless of proficiency level. An interesting feature is that the author devotes time to important language tasks such as letter writing and messaging, while also including colloquial expressions and structures, which rarely appear in language workbooks. If students are aiming to become communicative in French, this resource is essential.

This reviewer recommends using *French Verb Tenses* prior to *French Sentence Builder* because *French Verb Tenses* offers the necessary basic grammatical information. Once students are comfortable with *French Verb Tenses*, they can proceed to *French Sentence Builder*. Together, these workbooks are comprehensive and are a valuable resource for all students of French since they are so useful at all proficiency levels.

Eleanor Pelosi  
M.A. Candidate in French  
Georgia State University  
Atlanta, GA

### **Publisher's Response**

I am happy to respond to Eleanor Pelosi's review of *Practice Makes Perfect: French Verb Tenses* and *Practice Makes Perfect: French Sentence Builder*. The authors designed these workbooks so that learners would be able to study them independently of a formal course but, as she points out, these books can also serve as reference tools in the classroom.

We are pleased to find that the reviewer considers the lessons in *French Verb Tenses* to be intuitive and the examples straightforward. Trudie Booth, a lecturer in French at the University of Portland, understands the importance of providing opportunities to learn the topic in context. She has brought considerable teaching experience into writing a workbook that gradually builds in difficulty and provides a variety of exercises for learners to practice what they've learned.

Eliane Kurbegov, the author of *French Sentence Builder*, is equally well-suited to writing what we consider a unique book, a workbook that shows students how to combine various grammar structures to build more meaningful sentences. She brings 30 years of teaching experience to more than 100 exercises covering a variety of topics. A native speaker, her enthusiasm for French culture is evident in sections on letter writing and electronic messaging as well as colloquial expressions.

Both of these titles have proven to be strong additions to the Practice Makes Perfect series because the clear appreciation of the language shown by both these authors cannot help but instill confidence in learners as they develop their skills.

Garret Lemoi  
Editor  
McGraw-Hill Professional

Silver, Joanne S. *Les Chansons sous l'Occupation: French Songs of World War II*. Wayne, Pennsylvania: Beach Lloyd Publishers, 2010. Pp. 42. ISBN: 978-0-9819417-5-2. For further information visit [www.beachlloyd.com](http://www.beachlloyd.com), write to [beachlloyd@erols.com](mailto:beachlloyd@erols.com) or call toll-free (866) 218-3253.

*Les Chansons sous l'Occupation* is a highly original and significant contribution to French Studies insofar as it brings together a representative selection of hugely popular songs of the Occupation period celebrating the virtues of both sides: on the one hand, the collaborationist Vichy regime under the austere yet inspiring (though increasingly senile) national father figure, Marshal Pétain; on the other, the Resistance, which spanned the political gamut from de Gaulle to the Communists.

*Les Chansons sous l'Occupation* consists of two parts: a CD with 19 selections and an accompanying booklet consisting of four parts: Introduction; Mini-biographies, Illustrations and Lyrics; Additional French Songs of the period; Vocabulary; Questions and Projects; and References.

The CD is invaluable, for obvious reasons (I know of no other similar product); however, without the accompanying booklet, which identifies and attempts to situate each song in its proper ideological context, it is quite insufficient and, as it were, almost counterproductive. I mean, we don't want our students to go around humming some catchy collaborationist tune, any more than a professor of German would want his students to sing the Horst Wessel *Lied* ("The Horst Wessel Song" was a famous Nazi propaganda song to the glory of a "brown shirt" felled in a street skirmish with German Communists) as they go about their busy day.

The historical introduction is short and succinct and actually quite sufficient in a survey course on French civilization (which probably includes other, more in-depth readings on France and World War II); however, it goes without saying that teachers obviously should feel free to assign extra reading assignments as needed.

It is a well-known fact that during times of extreme duress, such as war, the civilian population experiences a need to find an outlet for their hardship and frustration in any form of entertainment available. We know that the theaters and cinemas of Paris were never as crowded as during the four years and forty-six days of German occupation, demonstrating "the need of the French people to escape into entertainment and to continue at least a thread of their celebrated fabric of *joie de vivre*" (4). However, it was not only the French who experienced a need to escape the realities of war but also the German occupier. "*Heureux comme Dieu en France*" ("happy as God in France") proclaims an old German proverb. Not surprisingly, Paris was the most popular city for a German soldier in occupied Europe, and hundreds of thousands of Germans transited through the City of Light at one time or another during the war. After the Liberation,

many entertainers such as Maurice Chevalier (and even national icon Edith Piaf) were pilloried for catering to the Germans at venues frequented by German officers and on the airwaves of Vichy-controlled Radio Paris, whereas up-and-coming literary stars such as J.-P. Sartre never suffered the same opprobrium, even though the latter's *Les Mouches* and *Huis Clos*, with their muted esprit resistant, premiered in occupied Paris in 1943 and 1944, respectively, to audiences that included German officers. Double standards and political agendas were ubiquitous in the aftermath of the Occupation as France struggled to come to grips with all that had transpired during the previous four years. But remember Talleyrand, who famously stated that treason was a matter of timing. Similarly, being a *résistant* was a matter of timing. Just look at future president François Mitterrand, who started out in the Vichy government, earning the *francisque* (a prestigious award for faithful service to Pétain's France) all the while he was gradually switching sides, a fact he could conveniently hide (after all, resistance could not very well be advertised in the middle of a war) and wait to reveal at the right moment that is to say, after the war. In a more advanced course, the instructor will want to examine the moral ambiguities of the period and go beyond the pat stereotypes that proliferate in popular culture such as music. Again, such is not the aim of this modest booklet.

To give the reader some idea of what to look for, let me examine just one selection, Léo Marjane's immensely popular and seemingly timeless song *Je suis seule ce soir*, whose refrain is unforgettable:

*Je suis seule ce soir  
Avec mes rêves  
Je suis seule ce soir  
Sans ton amour.*

The mini-biography provides the basic facts and reminds us of the artist's troubles after the war when she was accused of collaboration because she apparently performed in music halls and café-conc that catered predominantly to German officers. However, as anyone can see, the haunting lyrics of this, her most famous song, dating from 1942, evoke the plight of the very numerous French women alone at home thinking of their husbands held prisoner in Germany. In this regard, the bio might have included some discussion of this calamity. After all, following the fall of France in 1940 (the so-called *débâcle*) when mighty France collapsed like a giant deck of cards, there were more than one million French prisoners of war in Germany, spawning the ingenious but ultimately unsuccessful STO (*Service du Travail Obligatoire*) initiative whereby Germany would release one prisoner of war for every three Frenchmen who volunteered to work in Germany. In point of fact, Marjane's lyrics also relate the sense of loss experienced by anyone whose loved one had gone missing for one reason or another: a soldier in the ill-fated campaign of 1940, a prisoner in one of the many Vichy internment camps, a deportee (more often than not a Jew), a volunteer for the German armed forces (including the Charlemagne division of the infamous WaffWen-SS), or a *maquisard* (resistance fighter).

The vocabulary list at the end of volume, as well as the Questions and Projects section, are rather perfunctory and could easily be expanded by the instructor yet nevertheless contain several stimulating projects such as translating the lyrics of certain

songs and showing how they reflect the times. The Videography and Webography sections, similarly, are exceedingly short and should be expanded in future editions of this volume. On the other hand, it is easy enough for anyone interested to do a search on the Web. Again, the main value of *Les Chanson sous l'Occupation* lies in its novelty and usefulness in the French classroom. I am surprised that we have had to wait until now for a project such as this one and therefore recommend this title to all instructors of French at the high school and college levels.

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

### **Publisher's Response**

First, my thanks to Tom Conner for inspiring me to write the accompanying text to the CD. This guide is important, as the music out of context does not achieve the role of Remembrance so important to the study of Vichy France. For example, *Je suis seule ce soir* is not just a hauntingly beautiful song—it is historically significant. Similarly, the comments on teacher flexibility are most appropriate, as the booklet was intended to serve not only as a supplement to the music but also as a vehicle for the teacher to expand upon when appropriate and for the student to use creatively. And thank you for the recommendations for the second edition!

Joanne S. Silver  
 Beach Lloyd Publishers, LLC

The Editors of *Think French Magazine*. *Read & Think French*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2010. ISBN: 978-0-07-170233-1. Pp. 207. Textbook with an accompanying audio-CD.

*Read & Think French* is an immensely useful and highly entertaining guide to French and Francophone culture, the kind of book every visitor to France or student of French will not want to be without. It spans two thousand years of history and covers most of the Francophone world (minus the penguins in the only remaining French territory of French Southern and Antarctic Lands, *Terres Australes et Antarctiques Françaises!*), yet it is surprisingly comprehensive and offers insights that even an experienced French teacher may be ignorant of. For example, how many of us always remember that Alsace was exempted from the 1905 law on separation of Church and state (5), or that 11,000 soldiers died on November 11, 1918, between the signing of the armistice and the actual beginning of the cease-fire at 11 A.M. (79)? In case you're wondering, such trivia do shed light on the culture insofar as they help us understand why French people do things in a certain way (and will impress anyone you talk to, including the aforementioned teachers, who have little time to cultivate themselves anyway, especially if they happen to live in Wisconsin, where they are now on a most-wanted list or the endangered species list, depending on how you see things politically!) Ever wonder why Armistice Day is still a major holiday in France or why the last survivor of World War I, the Italian-born Foreign Legionnaire Lazare Ponticelli

(age 110), was given a state funeral at the Panthéon. It could have something to do with the fact that 1.4 million French soldiers were killed (to say nothing of the millions who came home without one or more limbs when it was all over!).

The editors of *Think French* magazine have brought together an eclectic but tantalizing potpourri of 1-2 page long “appetizers,” in French, to a formidable array of culturally fundamental, quintessentially French topics: *Culture, Voyages, Tradition, Célébration, Biographie, Coutumes, Les Arts, Histoire, Géographie, and Gastronomie*. It goes without saying that the concise (and often witty) but, alas, anonymous authors could not possibly do justice to these subjects; at some point, someone or other is going to feel excluded. Nevertheless, what they give us is a fair and representative, far from caricatural picture of French and Francophone culture. Although the emphasis throughout is on culture, the fact that each contribution is composed in an easy-to-understand but nevertheless authentic French means that users are bound to improve their understanding of French into the bargain. Contributions rarely exceed one page and always are accompanied by helpful cultural notes and a bilingual glossary. As the authors state by way of introduction, “This language learning tool is designed to build on and expand your confidence with French, presenting vocabulary and phrases in meaningful and motivating content emphasizing all for language skills” (x). Moreover, they go on to say that *Read & Think French* “accommodates a range of skill sets, from beginning to advanced” (x); however, it is not immediately clear how beginning students after one semester would approach an article any differently than college graduates or, God forbid, adult learners (and it is a well-known fact that they usually excel). As far as I can tell, each article is equally complex from a linguistic and cultural point of view. The accompanying audio-CD offers reinforcement through a selection of readings by native speakers. It is a shame that the authors could not find a way to include some cultural footage with each reading. Maybe in the next edition? I examined a major chunk of the articles in some detail, and, quite frankly, they all appear to be more or less on the same level of difficulty (which is not to say that they are too difficult for the beginning and intermediate-level student).

To give readers a flavor of what to expect, let me look at just a handful of contributions in the areas covered. In this regard it is unfortunate that one of the very first pieces, on religion in France, contains at least one egregious error (“*La France et la religion*” [5]). The eight religious wars that ravaged France took place, of course, in the sixteenth century, not the fourteenth, as stated. Moreover, the population of France almost certainly is more than 3% Muslim (unless inhabitants of Muslim origin are included in the 27% listed as atheists, as no doubt they should be, just like Catholics, who now only make up 64% of the population, according to our authors). Such statistics conveniently gloss over the fact that a much higher percentage of inhabitants is made up of French-born children of Muslim origin; in this day and age, as an explosive debate in France on national identity is taking place, it is important to get one’s facts straight, or one runs the risk of being somehow manipulated in one way or another by someone.

And so it goes. The contributions move from one end of the Francophone world to another, from a mildly controversial subject to a more traditional one. In the same section, on “*Culture*,” there is a very traditional evocation of traditional Christmas markets in Alsace and Québec. Another piece discusses legendary French rudeness (it

exists all right, but has its historical reasons as well as an obvious antidote: reading this book and making a *bona fide* effort to be pleasant whenever dealing with the proverbial “natives”). Short comprehension exercises in English follow each section but are more redundant than educational. Why not include more rigorous questions that make readers reflect on what they have just read and maybe even a vocabulary quiz?

The next section, “*Voyages*,” spans the gamut of the Francophone world, from France proper (what the French call *la France métropolitaine*) to Québec and the Caribbean, and highlights some of the regions that underscore not only its natural beauty but also its ethnic and cultural diversity. Last but not least, there is a wonderful piece on an institution, which, though threatened by new habits born in the wake of globalization, somehow still survives and constitutes a hallmark of French culture: the *pâtisserie*. The reader can almost smell those fresh, warm croissants (!) waiting for us early in the morning (perhaps after a *nuit blanche*?) and most certainly will be better equipped to explore (I guess, I mean sample) all or, at least, some of the wonders of a French bakery.

In the next section we set out to learn about French “*Traditions*,” but, of course, never know quite what to expect. Yet that is precisely the beauty of this collection: the unexpected lurks around the next corner, on the very next page. We are just as likely to learn about the privileged place of chocolate in France as about the French people’s sacred right to weeks upon weeks of paid holiday (not counting the *ponts* and other religious holidays that the French—despite being the irreligious people they manifestly are—remain very keen on preserving *coûte que coûte*). The selection on wine and cheese is *de rigueur*, of course, but contains some really useful pointers that even a battle-hardened Francophile like myself appreciated. If nothing else, everyone stands to pick up a few expressions and terms that will sound absolutely smashing at your neighbor’s wine tasting or at a “*bobo*” Beaujolais nouveau party.

“*Célébrations*” (why not include marriage in this section rather than in “*Traditions*”?) has a great piece on April Fool’s Day, historically informative and quite up-to-date. Guess what I am going to do in my classroom when April 1 comes around?

The section titled “*Biographies*” is vaguely unsatisfying, but, as I started out by saying, everyone who “does” France professionally will find something to complain about sooner or later. Gustave Eiffel, Edith Piaf, François Truffaut, Albert Camus, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Coco Chanel are obvious enough choices (though some would argue that even though JPS had a greater impact, Camus clearly was the more moral of the two so-called existentialist writers and the superior artist); but why should Aimé Césaire, Antonine Maillet, or even Matisse, for that matter, be automatically included?

The following section, on “*Coutumes*,” is terrific in its comprehensive coverage of distinctly French customs (and quirks) and offers practical advice that all and sundry would do well to acquaint themselves with before traveling to the *hexagone*, the awkward but oh so French name for their country (it has six natural borders). What is the *bise*? Why do French people spend such an inordinate amount of time kissing in public? How do you introduce yourself, and just whom do you call “*mademoiselle*” and “*madame*”? And when do you shake hands? How do you conduct yourself at the dinner table? What are the do’s and don’ts in French culture? And of course, gestures (my

advice, don't use your hands in polite company and risk offending someone. Even the most innocuous American gesture can take on a whole new meaning *outré-Atlantique*).

The section on “*Les Arts*” is what you might expect in a general interest volume: not bad, but nothing to write home about, either. There is a nice balance between old (medieval troubadours, Versailles, theater) and new (the unique institution that is the *cinémathèque française*, Parisian museums), between metropolitan France and the Francophone world (Québec and Guadeloupe). The same can be said of the “*Histoire*” section: there's something here for everyone. I particularly liked the pieces on the *fleur de lys* and the French Revolution (including the reflection on the *tricolore* and the *sans culottes*); they were unusually informative and objective. The essay on *La Nouvelle-France*, also, is first-rate. Jeanne d'Arc is included, as is that other femme fatale, Marie-Antoinette.

The penultimate section is “*Géographie*,” which is most appropriate given the diversity and physical extension of the Francophone world. We learn about the three great French rivers (the Seine, the Loire, and the Rhône). “*Les Plages Françaises*” are dispatched in a rather clinical, not to say antiseptic and dry contribution. Why not include some mention of Omaha Beach and maybe also something on a more personal note, making readers want to go to the beach on their own? The best essay on the subject of geography, on Belle-Ile, actually is to be found in a different section (“*Voyages*”). Perhaps they could be combined in a future edition.

Last but not least (especially not if you are French!) is a *grande finale* featuring a selection of French food titled “*Gastronomie*”: *baguettes*, *beignets*, *bouillabaise*, *bûche de Noël*, *foie gras*, *crêpes*, and *coq au vin* all make the list, as well as a variety of dishes from the Francophone world: from Quebec, Senegal, and the French West Indies, in particular.

As noted above, the accompanying audio-CD consists of a selection of sound tracks for each chapter that will help you learn your lesson by modeling correct pronunciation of vital vocabulary. If you do your homework before leaving for France, you are in for a treat. As an old German adage goes, you will be as happy as “*Dieu en France*,” and as Thomas Jefferson once said, “Every man has two countries: his own and France”—all of which only goes to show that France still has a lot of friends around the world.

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

### Publisher's Response

I am very pleased to respond to Professor Conner's thorough review of *Read and Think French*. With such a broad range of readings in this collection, it is inevitable that some will appeal more than others to any individual reader. I am delighted to see that the majority found favor, revealing perhaps as much about the reviewer and his wide interests and particular delight in French cuisine, as about the book itself!

As Professor Conner has indicated, the articles are designed to be both accessible and wide ranging, informing the learner with a cultural perspective at the same

time as enriching language skills. He raises a valid query about the level of intended audience. The authors recommend at least a semester of college or high school French; the inclusion of extensive glosses throughout will aid the advanced beginner to grasp meaning. The rich variety of readings and inclusion of recordings will ensure that more advanced learners, such as AP students, will find interest at the same time as building fluency.

The reviewer's critiques are also much appreciated. Obviously we shall correct the factual errors identified in the next reprint; his suggestions for improvements—particularly the addition of more extensive questions—will also be considered very closely for the next edition, not only of this French title, but also of its companion volumes for Spanish and Italian.

Christopher Brown  
 Publisher  
 McGraw-Hill Professional

Schultz, Jean Marie, and Marie-Paule Tranvouez. *Réseau: Communication, Intégration, Intersections*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2010. ISBN: 978-0-20-5740789. Pp. 462. Includes: textbook, Student Activities Manual, Answer Key to accompany the Student Activities Manual, Audio CD for the text and audio CD to accompany the Student Activities Manual, on-line resources: My French Lab Website and Companion Website. Supplementary materials for teachers include Annotated Instructor's Edition of the textbook, Instructor's Resource Manual, and Testing Program.

*Réseau: Communication, Intégration, Intersections* is a new intermediate French program best suited for college-level courses. It fully integrates the study of language and cultural knowledge. As its title suggests, it is based on the notion of multiple linguistic and historical intersections and incorporates the five principles of foreign language standards: communication, connections, cultures, comparisons, and communities.

The program is based on a holistic approach to language learning, according to which all activities are contextualized and theme-based. It is designed around the four fundamental language skills to help second-year students improve their skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The textbook provides intermediate learners with the tools necessary to move beyond the novice level toward competencies needed for success in more advanced courses and outside of the classroom. It accomplishes these goals by focusing on the skill most difficult to attain without immediate feedback from the instructor and most fundamental to proficiency: speaking.

The textbook is divided into twelve chapters focusing on different themes that inspire cross-cultural comparisons. The themes range from politics, urban life, and family relations to French and Francophone identities and France considered as a multicultural country. The context is broad and draws on the disciplines of politics, sociology, and the arts, in particular painting, sculpture, cinema, and literature. Each chapter has a similar format and is divided into several sections. The first section, "*Orientation culturelle*," serves as a basic introduction to the chapter's subject matter. The next section, "*Vocabulaire*," is designed to introduce new vocabulary tied to the

reading passages and offers a variety of exercises. The “*Conversation*” section contains a number of questions related to the main theme of the chapter that can be used for pair work or group work. It also presents specific conversation strategies, vocabulary, and oral models for carrying on a discussion on chapter-related topics. The “*Réflexion culturelle*” section invites students to compare aspects of American and French-speaking cultures. It includes an authentic text, pre-reading and post-reading activities, and follow-up reading comprehension questions. The goal of these questions is to foster discussion and interchange and an authentic literary or cultural reading passage designed to improve interpretative reading. In Chapter One, for example, students are encouraged to compare and contrast the relationship between parents and their children in France and the U.S. In each chapter, there are also three distinct grammar sections with oral grammar support exercises to be done in class. Grammar is presented entirely in the target language, and the exercises and grammatical explanations, which combine inductive and input processing approaches, are done in French. The authors present grammar points using well-chosen examples often drawn from students’ own individual interests. The interactive grammar presentations followed by the focused practice activities are designed to target grammatical competency and to integrate it within a variety of communicative modes. In order to contextualize grammar exercises, authentic texts are used. For example, the difference between the *passé composé* and the *imparfait* is illustrated by authentic passages from famous literary works, such as *Les Lettres persanes* by Montesquieu or *L’histoire de ma vie* by George Sand. Each chapter of the textbook also features a well-designed and planned writing component based on the Process Approach. It presents mini-composition lessons and introduces various writing strategies, from starting the paragraph and organizing ideas, to transitions. Students are guided throughout the writing process and encouraged to create Writing Portfolios. In order to further enhance the quality of students’ compositions, the authors have included professionally written models of the targeted composition strategy created in accordance with a genre-based approach to writing.

The textbook is accompanied by a variety of ancillary materials, both printed and online. The Student Activities Manual contains both workbook and lab exercises that come in a wide variety of formats. The listening program includes pronunciation practice, sound discrimination, intonation practice, and diction exercises. The written exercises involve a variety of contextualized activities, including form- and meaning-focused completion exercises, sentence constructions, and logic-based reformulations. The online resources include MyFrenchLab, an online learning system, which brings together the interactive version of the Student Activities Manual and the audio program and allows instructors to set grading parameters or listen to student-created audio recordings. The regularly updated companion Website offers additional grammar practice as well as Internet-based cultural activities, as well as other resources such as dictionaries and study manuals.

*Réseau: Communication, Intégration, Intersections* is an excellent program. It emphasizes interaction and communication by teaching students to express, interpret, and negotiate meaning in context. It motivates them to develop cultural awareness and express opinions through lively debate and oral and written discussion on a variety of timely and relevant issues. It also fosters critical thinking skills through

language learning. Most importantly, it strives to incorporate themes that show a multidimensional view of French and Francophone cultures, rather than a one-dimensional image of a homogenous France.

Andrzej Dziedzic  
 Professor of French  
 University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh  
 Oshkosh, WI

### History

Cahorn, Judi Olga. *The Incredible Walk: The True Story of My Parents' Escape from Nazi-Occupied France*. Wayne, PA: Beach Lloyd Publishers, LLC., 2009. Pp. 132. 18 B&W and 25 color illustrations. Softcover 5 ½" X 8 ½". \$19.95. ISBN: 978-0-9792778-8-7. For orders and further information, contact: Joanne S. Silver, Mgr., Beach Lloyd Publishers, LLC., P.O. Box 2183, Southeastern, PA 19399-2183. Tel: (610) 407-0130 or toll-free (866) 218-3253, pin 8668. Fax: (775) 254-0633. E-mail: [beachlloyd@erols.com](mailto:beachlloyd@erols.com). Website: [www.beachlloyd.com](http://www.beachlloyd.com).

*The Incredible Walk: The True Story of My Parents' Escape from Nazi-Occupied France* by Judi Olga Cahorn is the story of the author's parents' survival as Jews in Europe during the Second World War. Her father, Paul Sekelj, was originally from Novi Sad in Yugoslavia and studied electrical engineering in Karlsruhe, Germany. Her mother, Trudy Katzenstein, was born and raised in Munich, Germany and studied gymnastics at the Guenther Institute in Munich.

When it became clear in 1932 that it was no longer safe for Jews to remain in Germany, Paul convinced Trudy to go to Paris and wait for him there until he was finished with his studies and was able to join her. Lonely and fearful, Trudy found a reasonably priced apartment in the 17th arrondissement and was able to establish a gymnastics school, *Studio Katine*. When Paul joined Trudy in Paris, he worked for *Établissements Jouan*, a medical laboratory where he developed an instrument for detecting poisonous gases. It is largely thanks to Paul's position at *Établissements Jouan* and his probable involvement with the French Resistance that Trudy and he were able to successfully escape from Paris during the Exodus of 1940. From the unoccupied zone of France, the Sekeljs then took the treacherous journey across the Pyrenees to Spain, only then to be arrested as illegal refugees. Paul survived eight months in Barcelona's Cárcel Modelo before Trudy was able to secure his release with the help of Dr. Raphael from the Department of Medicine and Physics at the University of Barcelona and the Prisoners' Relief Center. After his release in July 1943, Paul worked for Dr. Raphael until March 1944, when he and Trudy were able to secure visas to Canada and complete the necessary paperwork authorizing them to leave Spain. They happily left Europe aboard the Portuguese ship *Serpa Pinto*. Trudy gave birth to a daughter, Nadine, during the treacherous voyage but, unfortunately, also gave birth to a twin son who did not survive. After arriving in Philadelphia, Paul, Trudy and Nadine eventually settled in Montreal, Canada, where they established a happy family life, and welcomed the birth of Judi. It was not until much later in life when Nadine found a newspaper clipping about her birth at sea, that the sisters learned of the parents' perilous survival during the Second World War.

*The Incredible Walk: The True Story of My Parents' Escape from Nazi-Occupied France* can be put to good use in the foreign language classroom. What distinguishes this text from other narrative accounts of France's "Dark Years" (the Occupation of France by Germany) is its focus on the extensive travels by Paul and Trudi. This geographical focus, incorporating the National Standards for Foreign Language Education of Connections with Other Disciplines, is greatly aided by the six colored maps found on pp. 94-97. The use of the maps can be extended by asking students to trace the route (which is not shown on the maps) that the Sekeljs took to flee Paris. Specifically, students will need to follow the route from Paris to Nantes on the Atlantic coast to Brive-la-Gaillarde (on the western edge of le Massif Central) to well south of Limoges and then back north again to Limoges. Moreover, the historical focus of the narrative is expanded beyond the borders of France and the fear of Hitler to include the horrors of Franco's oppressive regime in Spain.

In addition to her straightforward prose, which will not intimidate students, what truly enriches Cahorn's account of her parents' survival are the eighteen black and white and twenty-five color illustrations. Particularly touching are the original paintings by Paul depicting his time in the Cárcel Modelo prison in Barcelona as well as the newspaper clippings detailing the birth of Judi's sister Nadine on the Serpa Pinto. Equally moving is the afterword written by her sister Nadine, thus providing readers with the perspective of both sisters.

Also available free of charge to those who purchase *The Incredible Walk: The True Story of My Parents' Escape from Nazi-Occupied France* from Beach Lloyd Publishers is a translation into French of the set of twelve suggested discussion topics found on pp. 109-110. Combined with the list of bibliographic resources found on pp. 111-113 they allow teachers to assign the reading of the English narrative outside class and at the same time lead meaningful class discussions in French of the Sekeljs' survival in war-torn Europe.

Eileen M. Angelini  
Chair, Department of Modern Languages and Literatures  
Canisius College  
Buffalo, NY

### **Publisher's Response**

We very much appreciate this thorough and insightful review and recommendation for use in the French classroom. While reading a text in English outside of class and then working in French in the classroom setting may make the purists among us hesitate, it serves two important goals: the text is more speedily completed, and student comprehension of the story is ensured. In addition to the French questions available from the publisher, the teacher may also, of course, develop grammar, vocabulary and reading activities from the text. Recently, the archivist, Jean-Pierre Cahorn (the author's husband) has supplied a detailed verbal account of the trek through the various areas of the Pyrenees; a map, as well as a sample chapter of the text, will be forthcoming.

Joanne S. Silver  
Beach Lloyd Publishers, LLC

## Spanish

Leeser, M. J., B. Van Patten, and Gregory D. Keating. *Así lo veo*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2011. Includes: DVD Program, Activity Manual, Annotated Instructor's Edition, Online Learning Center. ISBN: 0-07-329682-1.

*Así lo veo* is an excellent, user-friendly intermediate college textbook for Spanish students. The Five Cs of the national standards are evident throughout *Así lo veo* as the authors fuse the three modes of communication to bring students to higher levels of learning. The text is based on a documentary-style video in which six Mexican nationals from diverse backgrounds discuss contemporary issues in unscripted interviews. Vocabulary, grammar, culture, and literary content are all culled from these issues and commentaries. The language is authentic, contextualized, current, and informal, thus providing students with appropriate input used by native speakers.

The text is a dense source of language learning and is organized into twelve paired thematically-based lessons that focus on what it means to be a good person, family and marriage, gender roles, religion, social problems, and the environment. These lessons are subdivided into segments *Así lo veo I, II, and III*, in which the various speakers discuss that unit's theme. Each segment includes pre-viewing (*Antes de ver*), post-viewing (*Después de ver*), and grammar (*Gramática*) sections. As learners begin each lesson, they are thoughtfully introduced to new vocabulary embedded in the videos and then given activities to demonstrate comprehension and personal expression in the language. Each lesson concludes with a section entitled *Así lo veo yo*, which provides a framework for composition development. Alternating lessons end with either a cultural reading or an authentic literary selection, which builds on the lesson's theme. The authors include pre-reading and post-reading activities for each selection to aid learners and teachers alike. Each lesson also includes two short segments called *Nota Cultural*, which offer cultural insights as well as suggestions for student presentations.

Within *Así lo veo*'s extensive online component, speakers from other Spanish-speaking countries offer their perspectives on each topic, providing learners with opportunities to experience a variety of accents. The online bilingual grammar tutorials for each lesson have a very good sound quality and can be downloaded through iTunes™. Through animation, a native English speaker clearly explains grammatical points in simple terms in the early tutorials. As the lessons progress, some explanations become rather laborious. At the end of each tutorial, a brief oral quiz is given along with a concluding discussion in English.

The text also offers instructors a variety of options to improve and stimulate language learning. PowerPoint™ presentations focusing on grammar and culture are accessible online with an image bank for instructors to customize presentations as needed. There are also online assessments that offer practice and immediate feedback. The formal assessment instruments include comprehensive and well-organized tests and answers for each lesson, with a format that allows for easy modification. There are two forms for each test; one is primarily a discrete point assessment, and the other contains more performance-based assessments and open-ended items. Rubrics are provided to measure student writing ability for each composition. Unfortunately, there are not any speaking assessments. The authors also provide an online workbook

(Manual) for students where their results can be entered directly into an online grade book. Navigating throughout the online material can become cumbersome, though; hyperlinks connecting all segments of a given chapter would make the program more manageable.

*Así lo veo* is rich in opportunities for both productive and receptive language. The authors' depth of knowledge of second language learning is clearly evident in the program, as it imbues the acquisition of a new language with contextualized and personal meanings. Native speakers discuss topics of interest to students in natural settings, and learners have multiple opportunities for using the language in a communicative framework in each and every lesson. Grammar presented in a variety of ways by varied use of the brief lessons within the text and the very detailed tutorials. The ample cultural and literary components support and extend the content of the video, adding significantly to the overall learning experience. This program offers students engaging material through which they can acquire a new language and a new way of seeing and navigating our world.

Bernadine Riquelme  
Teacher of Spanish and ESOL  
Gwinnett County Public Schools  
Lawrenceville, GA

### **Publisher's Response**

McGraw-Hill is pleased to have the opportunity to respond to Bernadine Riquelme's review of *Así lo veo*, which first appeared in January 2010. She describes the program as an "excellent, user-friendly" intermediate Spanish program that is based on a documentary-style video program and is "rich in opportunities for both productive and receptive language."

In her review, Riquelme begins with an overview of *Así lo veo*'s chapter organization, including its compelling and sometimes provocative chapter themes. She also mentions how students are "thoughtfully introduced" to the vocabulary of each theme in the context of the video, which also provides the basis for the grammar practice and "ample cultural and literary components" of each chapter.

Riquelme goes on to outline the "extensive" digital tools that accompany *Así lo veo*, including an online *Workbook/Lab Manual* in Centro, grammar tutorials, and oral quizzes, which expose students to a variety of opportunities for skills practice. In future revisions, we will take into consideration Riquelme's helpful suggestions on streamlining the grammar explanations in the tutorials as well as continuing to make our online resources easier to navigate. Riquelme also provides a brief description of some of the most useful instructor resources available with *Así lo veo*, including PowerPoints, an image bank, and a testing program.

Riquelme concludes her review by describing *Así lo veo* as a well-integrated program that presents language and culture in a contextualized, natural way that is meaningful to students who are eager to explore "a new way of seeing and navigating our world." Readers in search of a new intermediate Spanish text will find a thoughtful overview of *Así lo veo* and its ancillaries in this review.

McGraw-Hill World Languages is committed to publishing high-quality foreign language print and digital materials, and we are proud to include *Así lo veo* among our many successful programs. We again thank Bernadine Riquelme for sharing her review of *Así lo veo* with the readership of *The NECTFL Review*.

Katherine K. Crouch  
Senior Sponsoring Editor, World Languages  
McGraw-Hill Higher Education

Wakefield, Charito Calvachi. *Navidad Latinoamericana: Latin American Christmas*. With an introduction and Novena prayers by Marco Vinicio Rueda, S.J. Lancaster, PA: Latin American Creations Publishing, 2009. Pp. 88. Hardcover 9" x 9". Music CD with 24 tracks. \$24.95. ISBN: 0-9660690-1-3. Distributed in the United States by Proficiency Press. For further information, please visit <http://www.proficiencypress.com> or call toll-free (888) 744-8363.

*Navidad Latinoamericana: Latin American Christmas* is much more than a rich collection of twelve of the most popular Latin American Christmas Carols in both their original and folkloric versions with lyrics in Spanish as well as in English. It is also an unparalleled bilingual source (Spanish and English) for "*La Novena de Navidad*" ("Nine Days of Prayers Before Christmas") and includes Bible readings and "*Tradiciones navideñas en los países latinoamericanos*" ("Christmas traditions in Latin American countries") from these twenty-five countries or areas: Argentina, Bahamas, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay, and Venezuela. Wakefield explains the inspiration for assembling all these materials into one text: "This Book and CD result from my desire to make Latin American Christmas traditions, including carol tunes and lyrics, prayers, stories, and art, available in both the English and Spanish languages. When my nieces and nephews asked me to teach them about the celebrations in our native cultures, I realized that such resources were not easily available. As people come together to celebrate Christmas, this guide can both bring back memories of 'home' and childhood, as well as teach others, thereby extending these memories into the present. Now new generations of Latin American children living in the United States can learn by participating in the message of Christmas in ways that will link them in spirit to their ancestors. I would also hope that non-Latino individuals will be attracted to this Book and CD to see the common threads in the ways we all celebrate Christmas and to increase their understanding of who we are as people and nations sharing the Christmas spirit throughout the world" (5).

Whether educators agree or not, for example, that Mexico is a Latin American country or that Brazil should be included in the collection because it is a Portuguese-speaking country is of little importance. What is important is that the detail provided on the holiday traditions in each of the twenty-five areas is unsurpassed, allowing for rich discussions that compare and contrast the traditions in one's own culture and those described in the book (thereby easily incorporating the National Standards for Foreign Language Learning into the classroom). Moreover, what this reviewer found

to be particularly helpful was that included in the descriptions were explanations or words that came from languages other than Spanish. For example, in the description of Christmas in Venezuela, the author demonstrates which words come from Spanish, Guaraní, Chechua (Quechua), and Portuguese, showing the interconnectedness of languages that borrow naturally from each other as they evolve together in a given region.

Sung in Spanish by native speakers, the twelve songs included on the CD are: “*Campana sobre Campana*” (“Bells are Ringing”); “*Llegaron ya los Reyes*” (“The Three Kings”); “*Duérmete niño chiquito*” (“Go to Sleep Little Boy”); “*Claveles y rosas*” (“Carnations and Roses”); “*Las Posadas*” (“The Inn”); “*Los peces en el río*” (“The Fish in the River”); “*Noche de Paz*” (“Silent Night”); “*A la Huella, a la huella*” (“Following Their Own Footsteps”); “*Hacia Belén va una burra*” (“A Donkey Goes to Bethlehem”); “*En brazos de una Doncella*” (“In the Virgin’s Arms”); “*El Tamborilero*” (“The Drummer Boy”); and “*Una pandereta suena*” (“The Tambourine Rings”). Instructors could ask students to compare and contrast the songs with their English-language equivalents, to discuss the reasons behind slight variations in titles for the same song (for example, on the CD, “The Three Kings” is listed as “*Llegaron ya los Reyes*” but as “*Los Reyes magos*” in the book), and to do research on the history of the songs.

In addition to using *Navidad Latinoamericana: Latin American Christmas* during the holiday season, the text can also serve as a springboard for expansion activities on the twenty-five areas explored. For example, the description of Puerto Rico invites students to explore Puerto Rican traditions in their own communities (thus incorporating the National Standards for Foreign Language Learning), showing how some of them, for example, the Puerto Rican parade in New York City or traditional cuisine, have become seamlessly integrated into popular American culture. Finally, of special note is the fact that a portion of the sales of Wakefield’s *Navidad Latinoamericana: Latin American Christmas* goes to support the Foundation For the Benefit of Hispanic People in Lancaster, PA.

Eileen M. Angelini  
Chair, Department of Modern Languages and Literatures  
Canisius College  
Buffalo, NY

Fechter, Sharon and Sylvia López. *Paso Adelante: Spanish for High Beginners*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2008. Includes: Instructor’s Annotated Edition. ISBN-13: 978-0-618-25333-3. ISBN-10: 0-618-25333-5.

Intended for the advanced beginning student, *Paso Adelante* (Step Forward) is a fun, engaging, and effective textbook that will keep students interested. It covers a variety of themes which review students’ previous knowledge of the language and help them progress in their study of Spanish. The entire book may be taught in one or two semesters. The *pasos* (chapters) are indeed steps forward in the acquisition of the target language. Each *paso*’s title is a Spanish proverb, and its subject is developed in a very engaging manner which aims at involving the students in meaningful situations.

The first *paso*, *Contra lo malo aprendido, el remedio es el olvido* (“Against what was badly learned, the medicine is the ear”) is a review of basic vocabulary and structures such as greetings, introductions, numbers, colors, personal pronouns, gender of nouns, agreement, and the present progressive. The readings of the *Repaso*, written in English, discuss the colonization of Spain and the Americas. They provide readers with a history of the Spanish language and use colorful maps to show the evolution of Spanish in different countries. Finally, the *Repaso* encourages students to think critically and to do research by comparing the ways the British and the Spanish colonized the Americas. The other *pasos* of the book are: *Paso 1* “*El que nada sabe, nada tiene*”: *Los estudios y las profesiones* (“The person who knows nothing, owns nothing” and professions”); *Paso 2* “*El casado, casa quiere*”: *Nuestra casa, nuestra familia y nuestras tradiciones* (“The married one wants a house”: our house, our family, and our traditions); *Paso 3* “*Adonde el corazón se inclina, el pie camina*”: *De viaje* (“To where the heart is the foot walks”: traveling); *Paso 4* “*A más doctores, más dolores*”: *Nuestra Salud* (“To more doctors, more pains”: our health); *Paso 5* “*Barriga llena, corazón contento*”: *La comida* (“Full belly, happy heart”: food”); *Paso 6* “*El pez grande se come al chico*”: *Nuestro mundo natural y nuestro medio ambiente* (“The big fish eats the big one”: our natural world and our environment); and a short final step, *Paso Adelante*, which aims at discussing the future of Spanish in the United States and at briefly introducing students to structures they will encounter in future courses, for example, perfect tenses and the imperfect subjunctive. Furthermore, students are asked to reflect on what they have learned in *Paso Adelante* as a whole.

The vocabulary sections are rich in pictures and examples of real-life situations, which helps students learn through context to communicate effectively. These sections also encourage students to use their previous knowledge of Spanish by making use of the many cognates they encounter while learning Spanish; these sections accomplish this through several *Herramientas estratégicas* (Strategical Tools), such as grouping words and ideas according to their meanings or shared characteristics and visualizing (this part calls students’ attention to the fact that they may learn better if they associate a new word in Spanish with its image).

The *Comunicación Lingüística* section encourages students to use the structures learned in meaningful, real-life situations. Students should be able to study the explanations before class and then do the activities in class. Such activities, usually done in pairs or small groups, guide students to use the structures studied to ask and answer questions about the students’ everyday life.

*Paso Adelante*’s Writing and *Conéctate con la comunidad* (Connect with the Community) sections are particularly interesting. In the section on writing, good examples are provided as well as clear, detailed instructions about what students are supposed to write. In the *Conéctate con la comunidad* section, students are encouraged to go beyond the classroom to research a variety of pertinent topics such as community clinics, restaurants, and environmental organizations around town. Other points of interest in *Paso Adelante* include the introduction of several famous Hispanic people and their achievements, such as Isabel Allende, Frida Kahlo, and César Chávez.

In my opinion, this textbook is very interesting and appealing to the student (particularly the *Culturas y Comunidades* (Cultures and Communities) section), and

my only concern is that the readings of *Paso* 1 through 6 may be a little too difficult even for advanced beginners. To address this concern, several reading strategies are provided (such as keeping a positive attitude towards reading, taking notes, using background knowledge, reading several times, and so on), with hopes that they will help students comprehend and be critical of what they read.

Overall, I congratulate the authors for such a well-conceived textbook and hope students will enjoy and appreciate the language more as well as be well prepared for their next intermediate-level Spanish class.

Jeanine Lino Perez  
Lecturer  
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro  
Greensboro, NC

Donley, Philip R. and Jose A. Blanco. *¡Viva!* Boston, Massachusetts: Vista Higher Learning, 2011. Includes: Workbook, Workbook/Video Manual, Lab Manual, Instructor's DVD set. ISBN: 978-1-60576-095-7.

*¡Viva!* is a compact version of Vista Higher Learning's earlier textbook *Aventuras*. It is designed to present a complete Spanish course that can accommodate a two-semester, quarter, or trimester format and allow for minimal hours of instructor contact. The text contains 16 chapters covering the full spectrum of Spanish grammar. The chapters feature a tiered, four-part practice sequence geared toward productive output and the incorporation of meaningful communicative activities using high frequency vocabulary along with an online lab component.

Instructors receive an annotated text, workbook/video manual, lab manual, DVD set, and Website resources. The student package includes the text, workbook /video manual, textbook activities CDs, *Escenas* CD-ROM, an interactive CD-ROM packet, a dictionary compatible with the textbook, a lab manual, and a companion Website key.

*¡Viva!* is well structured and multifaceted. Each chapter consists of an orderly five-stage presentation that is consistent throughout the text and is coordinated with workbook activities and online ancillaries. In the first section of each chapter, readers find the language objectives and expected learning outcomes along with a thematic photograph that provides a "hook" for the instructor to introduce the lesson and its goals in the target language. Afterwards, the text offers instructors a variety of presentation choices for reinforcement and internalization of the vocabulary. The second section of each chapter focuses on the adventures of four culturally diverse Spanish-speaking college students on a summer tour through Ecuador via a streaming video. In the video, the characters realistically portray everyday situations that reinforce the vocabulary and grammar contextually in order to support the learning objectives. The author then presents a cultural reading that amplifies the theme as it relates to today's Spanish-speaking world. The Website allows instructors a variety of options that enrich the lesson. The fifth section reflects a steady progression through the steps of Spanish grammar. Three and sometimes four grammar topics are presented in each lesson. The presentations are clear and allow instructors a variety of methods to reinforce content.

*¡Viva!* also offers instructors significant breadth to differentiate lessons using the textbook, workbook, and Website. Instructors can custom-design classroom activities and homework by combining grammar and vocabulary into authentic reading activities. For example, an actual sports section from a Hispanic newspaper can be incorporated to create a forum for reiterating the theme and vocabulary and placing it in a real-life setting. In addition, each chapter is enhanced with vignettes that contrast cultural differences between English and Spanish speakers. Likewise, short film scenarios are presented on the Website that demonstrate situation-specific language and culture in short clips.

The instructor's version of the Website contains a lesson plan to facilitate planning according to semester, trimester, or quarter formats. Exams can be created for individual chapters and are easy to customize. Instructors also have access to amplified vocabulary lists, teaching tips, and power point presentations of grammar and exercises. Additionally, instructors can design online or have source-ready exercises to facilitate language learning.

*¡Viva!* also offers outstanding technical support. The online training sessions, frequent webinars, and updates are very informative to help veteran and novice instructors take students to higher levels of language learning.

Chapters 1 and 2 introduce students to greetings and simple verb conjugations. Then, immediately following chapter 2, *¡Viva!* takes students on a trip through the Spanish-speaking populations of the world, starting with the United States and Canada via readings and videos. Chapters 3 and 4 focus on the first problem area of stem-changing verbs before a cultural study of Mexico is presented. This sequence is repeated throughout the text, building student confidence through an orderly, predictable approach. Grammar is presented in a classic order. The grammar is well explained with ample examples of oral and written exercises in the text. Chapters 5 and 6 present the present progressive, regular preterit, and indirect object pronouns. The cultural focus in the section between Chapters 6 and 7 is the geography of the Caribbean. Chapters 7 and 8 present more complex grammatical topics such as reflexive verbs, the irregular preterit, the expression "to like" (*gustar*), and double object pronouns. The cultural section between Chapters 8 and 9 is the first of a two-part presentation on South America. Chapter 9 is devoted to the irregular preterit verbs with ample time and exercises needed to master this difficult area. In Chapters 10 and 11 the imperfect tense is introduced before the authors contrast the uses of the preterit and imperfect tenses. Chapters 12 through 14 present the subjunctive and commands, after which the second part on South American geography and culture is found. This reviewer found this section to be very student-friendly in presentation, support, and time allotted to cover the material. Chapters 15 and 16 cover the perfect, future, conditional, and past subjunctive tenses.

*¡Viva!* is a teacher- and student-friendly text, well structured for first-year college Spanish. It is well supported with state-of-the-art technology and connected to contemporary cultural themes. Its strength lies in its flexibility for the instructor to improvise using a wide variety of options for practice of lesson themes and subsequent assessment. *¡Viva!* allows for diversity of teaching styles while allowing instructors to teach to the diverse learning styles present in today's classrooms. The repetition of

chapter organization throughout the book creates a familiar and comfortable format for students. Its value is the complete integration of the program coupled with timely contemporary cultural presentations. Due to outstanding instructor support and the step-by-step assistance with each lesson, *¡Viva!* is an excellent text for beginning teachers.

I have used *Aventuras* for nine years and am highly satisfied. The program works well in the classroom and gives instructors the freedom to use their own creativity and teaching styles.

Joe LaValle  
Assistant Professor of Spanish  
Gainesville State College  
Gainesville, GA

### **Publisher's Response**

Vista Higher Learning proudly acknowledges the complimentary review of *¡Viva!* presented by Professor Joe LaValle. As a specialized publisher dedicated to the field of foreign language teaching and learning, we put great care and effort into every individual title that we publish. We are very pleased to be publishing exciting, technology-rich materials in Spanish as well as in French, Italian, and German and welcome input from any and all instructors teaching with any of our programs.

Deborah Coffey  
Managing Editor

## **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://alpha.dickinson.edu/prorg/nectfl/software.html>

Thomas S. Conner, Review Editor  
St. Norbert College  
De Pere, WI 54115-2009  
[tom.conner@snc.edu](mailto:tom.conner@snc.edu)  
920-403-3102

## *In Memoriam*

Francis J. [Frank] Mulhern

**Francis J. [Frank] Mulhern** died on January 11, 2011. He served as a supervisor of foreign languages in the Wissahickon and the Wallingford-Swarthmore School districts. He later taught Spanish and student education courses at Chestnut Hill College, La Salle University, Cabrini College, and St. Joseph's University. For more than a decade he was coordinator of the summer intensive language program for high school students at Ursinus College. In 1989, he developed a summer program in Arabic and Japanese language and culture at Temple University. He was past president of Montgomery County Association of Teachers of Foreign Languages, past president of the Pennsylvania Modern Language Association, Chair of the Northeast Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages in 2004, and served as NECTFL representative to ACTFL.

These tributes were made by some of his professional friends and appeared in the 2011 NECTFL conference program.



“He has worked tirelessly and with the utmost sincerity to make teaching and learning a truer experience for everyone, and in that he has succeeded brilliantly. In that he leaves behind a true legacy.”

“You could always count on Frank to be direct, honest, and to the point...”

“His instincts were unerring and his commitment was unwavering. And his sense of humor was wicked!”

“Frank was such a great personal and professional warrior!”

“He was such a gentle man with great insights and a wonderful perspective on life and living it to the fullest.”

“He is safe in the love of the many people he has touched with his presence, kindness, and dedication. He was one of a kind...”

“A friend to foreign languages, a friend to foreign language educators, and our friend;

“A wise and compassionate man with a great sense of humor, and our friend;

“A tireless advocate for teachers with a profound sense of the importance of service, and our friend.”

“His dedication to world language educators across the country has ensured that more and more language learners of all ages have opportunities to achieve the necessary language proficiency for success in the multilingual world of today and tomorrow. He was truly amazing!”

“What will the FL world be like without Frank?”

“He was such a blessing to us all and a bright star to our profession. When I think of Frank Mulhern, the term ‘voice of reason’ always come to mind.”

“His efforts have made a difference.”

“He devoted time and energy selflessly to the cause of strengthening language learning opportunities and experiences for students. ...[H]e saw the work of language organizations [...] as being pivotal in advocating for language learning and bringing about positive changes in the language classroom. Somewhere Frank is still cheering the language profession on to continue the work for which he had a passion like no other language professional.”

**NECTFL Mailing List Available to  
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**O**ur 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 individuals 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](mailto:nectfl@dickinson.edu) for further information.

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Carlisle, PA 17013-2896

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## **2012 CONFERENCE DATE AND LOCATION**

**April 21-23, 2012**

**Baltimore Marriott Waterfront Hotel**