

# Mosaic

## A Journal for Language Teachers

Published by éditions SOLEIL publishing inc.

### In this issue...

#### **3 The Importance of a Culturally and Linguistically Relevant Education for First Nations Students**

*Claudia Patenaude*

*If we are to save irreplaceable resources such as endangered First Nations Languages, we must act quickly and without restraint.*

#### **14 Increasing Use of Target Language in Classroom Interactions**

*Constance K. Knop*

*Knop presents strategies and activities that have been used successfully by foreign language teachers to increase target language use. By implementing these approaches in a systematic, progressive manner, teachers can gradually enable and empower their students to understand, interact and communicate in more classroom situations in the target language.*

#### **26 Suggestions for Language Teachers Who Have Students With Visual Impairments**

*Philip M. Donley*

*Students with visual disabilities pose special problems for the instructor. Donley offers some concrete suggestions for students with visual disabilities.*

Edited by: Anthony Mollica

Vol. 8 No. 4

ISSN 1195-7131

Summer 2004

# Mosaic

## Editor

**Anthony Mollica**

*professor emeritus*

Faculty of Education, Brock University

## Associate Editor

Ronald J. Cornfield

## Managing Editor

Virginia Plante

## Editorial Board

**Paolo Balboni**  
Università di Venezia "Ca'Foscari"  
**Olenka Bilash**  
University of Alberta  
**Pierre Calvé**  
University of Ottawa  
**Helen Christiansen**  
University of Regina  
**Jim Cummins**  
Ontario Institute for Studies  
in Education

**Marcel Danesi**  
University of Toronto  
**Charles Elkabas**  
University of Toronto at Mississauga  
**Serafina Lina Filice**  
Università della Calabria  
**Peter Heffernan**  
University of Lethbridge  
**Stephen Krashen**  
University of Southern California

**Keith Mason**  
New Providence High School, NJ  
**Frank Nuessel**  
University of Louisville  
**Merle Richards**  
Brock University  
**Roseann Runte**  
Old Dominion University  
**Rebecca Valette**  
Boston College

Visit us on the web at: [www.soleilpublishing.com](http://www.soleilpublishing.com)

Founded in 1993 by Anthony Mollica, **Mosaic. A Journal for Language Teachers** is a journal published four times a year (Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter) by éditions Soleil publishing inc. Manuscripts and editorial communications should be sent to:

Professor Anthony Mollica  
Editor, **Mosaic**  
P.O. Box 847  
Welland, Ontario L3B 5Y5.  
Tel/Fax: [905] 788-2674  
E-mail: [mosaic@soleilpublishing.com](mailto:mosaic@soleilpublishing.com)

All articles are refereed anonymously by a panel of readers.  
Authors are required to be subscribers to the journal.

Mail Canadian subscriptions to:

**Mosaic**  
P.O. Box 847  
Welland, Ontario L3B 5Y5  
Canada

Mail U. S. and Overseas subscriptions to:

**Mosaic**  
P.O. Box 890  
Lewiston, NY 14092-0890  
USA

Telephone/Fax: [905] 788-2674.  
E-mail: [mosaic@soleilpublishing.com](mailto:mosaic@soleilpublishing.com)

© 2004 by éditions Soleil publishing inc. All rights reserved.

Toll Free Order Desk Fax: 1-800-261-0833

## Subscription Rates

(4 issues per volume sent to the same address):

1-5 subscriptions \$20.00 each  
6-50 subscriptions \$19.00 each  
51+ subscriptions \$18.00 each

Single copies \$6.00. Back issues are available at regular subscription price.

Canadian orders please add 6% GST.

U.S. subscriptions same rate as above in U.S. currency.

Overseas subscriptions \$50.00 each in U.S. currency. (Sent by air mail).

Advertising rates available on request.

No part of this publication may be stored in a retrieval system, translated or reproduced in any form or by any means, graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

**Mosaic** is indexed in the Canadian Education Index by Micromedia Ltd., 20 Victoria St., Toronto, Ont. M5C 2N8, Tel.: (416) 362-5211, Fax: (416) 362-6161. **Mosaic** is available on microfiche from the ERIC Document Research Service (ERDS) at 1-800-443-3742 or (703) 440-1400.

The language graduate who never reads a professional journal and participates only minimally, if at all, in professional meetings, will stagnate. There is an onus on the profession in all areas to upgrade and keep abreast of current developments in the field.

– Peter Heffernan

*Claudia Patenaude*

## The Importance of a Culturally and Linguistically Relevant Education for First Nations Students

*If we are to save irreplaceable resources such as endangered First Nations languages, we must act quickly and without restraint.*

"If our peoples' languages are to survive and to experience the resurgence which is necessary for survival, we must act immediately and must develop resources, skills, and understanding of what is necessary on a community-based level. Only then, will there be some assurance that our Aboriginal languages continue as a living force, thereby enabling our peoples' cultural strengths to continue to grow and flourish."

*Verna Kirkness*

### Introduction

Although some strides have been made to better the schooling experience of First Nations (FN) students in Canada, most FN students continue to be educated in mainstream or mainstream-like classrooms where FN languages and values receive little or no attention. In such contexts, family and community members have little say in the education of their children, while the language of instruction, and the classroom materials and practices poorly reflect the values and concerns of a given FN culture. As a result, FN students may have a negative self-concept, poor attendance records, less social and academic success than their non-native peers, and an unfortunate lack of mother tongue language skills.

Settings where traditional

knowledge, language, culture, and cultural identity are suppressed are still commonplace in FN education contexts. However, as more and more bands take control of education in FN communities, their students are becoming increasingly aware of both their place in their immediate surroundings, as well as in the larger Canadian context. In such cases, FN students must no longer adhere solely to mainstream principles, language, and values, but can rather benefit from both traditional FN languages and knowledge as well as those of the dominant group. It is essential that educators, inside and outside FN communities, assist in the strengthening of the FN students' self-image by familiarizing them with the languages, histories and cultures of FN peoples, and this by way of culturally and linguistically relevant pedagogy.

Due to a number of factors including the encroachment of the dominant group's values and language, as well as the negative legacy of the residential school system imposed on FN peoples, an astounding number of FN languages throughout Canada are in grave danger of extinction. Adding to such a grim reality, some feel that there is little evidence of genuine concern on the part of decision makers that FN languages be preserved and maintained (Heit & Blair, 1993). What can be done

to reverse such an unfortunate and severe situation? Why is it so difficult to develop a mechanism for the preservation and maintenance of FN languages and cultures in Canada?

Each First Nation is diverse and unique. FN communities in Canada reflect tremendous linguistic, cultural, geographic, historic, and economic diversity. The idea of being generically "Indian" is but a figment of the North American collective imagination. Although there are some commonalities within the realm of traditional practices, ceremonial rites, and ideas of child-rearing for instance, each community approaches cultural practices and community issues, such as education, in various ways. From an education perspective, this diversity of cultures, languages and experiences means that educational approaches and strategies are unlikely to be generalizable among all FN peoples, which greatly increases the complexity of the issue of relevant education.

In order to be appropriate and relevant, content, curriculum, and methods must be developed locally so that the needs of the students in question can be met. Therefore, it is important to recognize that individual FN communities are not only entitled to have a say in the education of their student population, but are also best equipped to deal with the development and implementation thereof, and thus ensure the preservation and maintenance of FN languages and cultural diversity in their own communities.

Due to the multicultural nature of our nation, language programs are not only popular, but also commonplace in Canadian society. With regard to the literature of language and culture programs available in Canada, there has been much published on

the topic of French immersion, as well as programs for English or French as a second language. There are numerous publications available on the topic of Heritage/International programs available to various minority groups. Nonetheless, none of the aforementioned areas of study are entirely pertinent to FN language and culture education. Publications which deal with the pedagogical practices and curriculum specific to FN needs, interests, teaching and learning techniques are few and far between.

As more communities work toward developing and implementing programs of this nature, additional studies on the subject are becoming available. There are short studies and reports obtainable which are specific to a particular FN community, but such articles certainly do not include information which is generalizable to all FN. Because of this, models of FN language and culture programs are difficult to utilize, as each community must deal with their own situation on a very personal level. Due to a lack of relevant literature, professionals in each community are left to make decisions for their specific case with little or no sound information to back up their cause.

While FN communities continue in their attempts to implement culture and language programs, documentation of such programs must be meticulously instigated and maintained in order to ensure that other communities wishing to do the same will be provided with some basis with which to work. Studies of FN communities and how they have come to maintain their ancestral language by way of language programs is crucial. The question of culturally and linguistically relevant pedagogy has been addressed in few articles (Maina, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Some authors have touched upon the issue in more vast terms but have not included the special circumstances of FN peoples per se. Publications regarding the long term benefits of culture and language programs in FN communities are practically non-existent, as initiatives are in the very early stages of development. It is therefore but a matter of time, one would hope, before literature on the topic of FN education becomes more readily available.

### Language and Culture in a FN Education Context

Language programs in Canada are often implemented as a means to preserve and/or maintain various cultural heritages. FN students should be able to rely, to a certain extent, on their schooling experience as a way to value their cultural identity, rather than hinder it as has been the case in the past. Language and culture are intimately linked through an inherent reciprocity. In the case of many FN, the use of ancestral languages has declined, and perhaps traditional cultural practices along with this unfortunate phenomenon (Norris, 1998). Three areas which are affected greatly by the aforementioned relationship will be examined at this time:

- cultural identity,
- ideologies and world view, and
- sense of self-worth/self-concept.

### Cultural Identity

Language functions as a constant assurance of an ability to learn in a particular linguistic and cultural context, and as an essential component of the development of personal and cultural identity. Not only are FN languages perceived as the embodiment of cultural distinctiveness and identity, their preservation and maintenance is also upheld as a rallying point to

mobilize, advance, and legitimate FN activism (Ross, 1979). Therefore, one might contend that without their languages intact, FN will ultimately lose a firm grasp on what can be viewed as FN cultural identity altogether.

It is an essential component of the schooling experience to feel a validation of one's culture and an understanding of one's place in its history (Taaffe & Fox, 1989). A strong FN cultural and linguistic base in the classroom grounds the student for successful learning, as well as ensures the maintenance of personal as well as collective FN identity. Without such a base, success in learning would be limited, and leave the student conflicted in identity. FN students are often educated within a school culture that is representative of North American middle-class dominant culture while belonging to one that is frequently dissimilar. As a result, such students experience a confusion of cultural identity and are unable to adjust, with any degree of success, to the schooling environment (McAlpine, Eriks-Brophy & Crago, 1996). This is a valid rationale for an education system which ensures the promotion and valuing of FN cultural identity.

### Ideologies and World View

Not only is cultural identity affected by language use, but so is a group's ideologies and world view. By solely utilizing and legitimating dominant languages in the FN school structure, as has been the case since the beginning of the residential school era, language serves as a tool for the acculturation of FN to the values and assumptions of the "West". By depriving FN of the use of their mother tongues, FN have also been deprived of the ability to develop adequate ways of thinking, values and ideas specific to their culture. Language is a means of expressing one's

philosophy of life, way of thinking and way of being. Such ideologies may, in part, be language specific, as terms are used to best describe certain ideas and thoughts, feelings and modes of expression. Learning a people's language leads to a greater understanding and appreciation of that people's way of viewing and classifying the world, as a result, benefiting all who are involved in this learning process (Mollica, 1993).

### Sense of Self-Worth/Self-Concept

The ways in which a language is used and valued also affect the FN student's sense of self-worth. Self-conception is a significant determinant of learning, while at the same time nurtured by one's awareness of how one is perceived by others. Language is such an integral part of an individual's being and culture, that the acceptance of one's language is part and parcel of one's being accepted as a person (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1975). Ancestral language programs have favourably influenced the affective domains, serving to enhance or reinforce the students' sense of identity and pride in belonging to a First Nation (LaRose, 1991). It is then no surprise that students respond positively to material and practices which they perceive to be culturally and linguistically relevant (McAlpine & Herodier, 1994).

### Culturally and Linguistically Relevant Pedagogy

FN have begun to move from education models of colonial domination and assimilation to ones that are both culturally and linguistically relevant and empowering. Furthermore, as a way to maintain the relationship between language and culture, FN communities are attempting to incorporate programs and materials which are culturally and

linguistically relevant to their respective student population.

Culturally and linguistically relevant pedagogy can be defined as classroom practices and teaching approaches which are conducive to the learning styles of FN students, while containing relevant information of interest and of use to these students (Ladson-Billings, 1994). This type of pedagogy will necessarily:

1. respect both historical and contemporary aspects of the students' culture;
2. validate the realities of the world in which the students live by recognizing its existence and its value;
3. use educational methods that build on cultural strengths; and
4. demonstrate how those strengths can be used to benefit both FN and the larger Canadian society (Maina, 1997).

According to Battiste & Barman (1995), the education of FN students must be built around the rich cultural heritage they bring to the classroom in order to develop the sense of pride that is critical to personal and cultural identity, as well as academic success.

Research on FN education confirms that when students develop the ability to communicate in a FN language, learning that language will reinforce, not interfere with, the learning of English, French, or other languages. In those FN communities where no FN language is spoken, a culturally and linguistically relevant program will serve to introduce the FN language to the students. In communities where some proficiency in the FN language exists, the program will assist in the development and maintenance of that language. In communities characterized by greater fluency in a FN language,

the program will support the use of that language as the language of instruction in those subjects that would be enhanced by the close relationship between language and culture (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1999).

### The Need for Culturally and Linguistically Relevant Pedagogy

There are two very important reasons why FN communities should strive toward the development and the implementation of culturally and linguistically relevant pedagogical practices and content in their schools:

1. FN languages are extremely endangered; and
2. the social and academic success rates of FN students are severely below the national average.

Boseker (1994) points out that of the fifty-three Aboriginal languages still spoken in Canada, only three (Cree, Ojibway, and Inuktitut) appear to have a somewhat secure future, while more than forty are in danger of prompt extinction (Norris, 1998). In many instances, due to close geographical proximity to southern Canadian society, as well as an overwhelming inundation of mainstream culture, many communities face the problem of possessing few young speakers of the ancestral language, leaving only some elders and older members of the community with a firm grasp of the language. The young generations are no longer acquiring the ancestral language as a first language, but rather, in the best of circumstances, as a second one.

Educated primarily in the dominant language, such youth will not have a sound enough knowledge of the FN language to transmit it to their own children

in the future (Drapeau, 1993). Loss of the ancestral language is often exemplified in the FN community's school system where the major language of instruction is either French or English, depending on the location of the said community. The challenges of language preservation and maintenance are a grave concern in many FN communities in Canada as truly fluent speakers grow fewer and older, and younger generations grow up inundated by the constant exposure to the English and French languages transmitted via cable, satellite dishes, and videos.

Despite these difficulties, there are currently numerous efforts being undertaken within FN communities to reverse this trend by those committed to teaching, learning, and recording ancestral languages. FN language literacy, as supported through culturally and linguistically relevant pedagogical practices, is seen as a key factor in language survival (Price, 1981). Furthermore, FN language literacy is well documented as a key factor in both individual development, academic and social success, and cultural evolution (Stairs, 1988).

Heyman (1984) argues that the relative failure of FN students can be summarized in the following terms:

“cultural and linguistic differences, environmental deprivation, poor teaching, poor facilities, lack of motivation, and value differences” (Heyman, 1984, p. 14).

FN students in Canada are more likely to leave the education system prematurely for a number of factors: school is not of interest to them; curriculum meets neither their needs nor their interests; higher education means leaving their home communities; etc.

The ongoing interaction

between teachers and FN students, each of whom may have different cultural backgrounds, may result in the alienation of the students and the placing of unnecessary obstacles in the way of their learning. Unless the teacher chooses to recognize the social nature of the classroom and to work toward integrating his teaching with the way of life of the FN learner, he will not be able to elicit active learning experiences from his students (Haig-Brown, 1992).

Some data indicates that North American Aboriginal students lag two to four grade levels behind the national norm (Boseker, 1994). Some feel that by incorporating FN language and culture in FN schools, absenteeism is reduced and academic achievement is improved (Boseker, 1994). This ties in nicely with the issue of self-concept as the students realize that their languages and their cultures are valued just as the dominant language and culture of their given situation.

The curriculum used in schools in FN communities which mimics that of the province, is often not relevant, and the philosophy is geared basically to the integration of FN students with the non-Native society. For decades, FN students were expected to leave their home communities in order to pursue studies beyond the elementary level. In such situations, because students are taught skills that are intended for life in a non-Native society, their ability is restricted not only by the inappropriateness of much of what is learned at school, but also by the isolation from home where one should acquire the skills and concepts necessary to one's own way of life. The following section looks at early models which have attempted to eliminate negative factors such as the aforementioned.

### Early Models of Culturally and Linguistically Relevant Pedagogy

A familiarity with both the definition of culturally and linguistically relevant pedagogy, as well as the need for such an approach within FN education systems, enriches the ensuing discussion of some of the earliest forms of such pedagogies as developed and implemented around the world by various indigenous populations. In order to compensate for the lack of concrete examples and models within our own country, it is useful for FN in Canada to look at the educational practices of other indigenous populations throughout the world. Although the contexts are often quite different in terms of population, geographical locations, funding, political support, and numerous other factors, there is much to be learned from other programs. The objective is always quite similar: the preservation and maintenance of a language and culture that is in need of support for fear of losing it forever.

The following section explores four very distinct indigenous groups' efforts made to preserve their language and culture in a modern-day context:

1. Maori of New Zealand;
2. Sámi of Norway;
3. Inuit of Canada; and
4. Navajo of the United States.

#### Maori (New Zealand)

In the early 1980s, the indigenous population of New Zealand began experiencing somewhat of a cultural renaissance: language programs were being implemented in order to avert further disintegration of an already threatened language base. The Maori continue to make great strides at both the community and national levels with regard to

language and culture preservation practices, particularly by developing programs which encourage young Maori children to learn and live immersed in Maori culture.

An example of such an endeavour is that of Kohanga Reo (literally, "language nests"), which are Maori language immersion preschools. This community-based and culturally-sensitive mechanism for language preservation within the broader context of Maori self-determination, relies on community-involvement and an extended family setting to provide a learning context for the enculturation of Maori cultural values and language. In this context, Maori is viewed not only as a language of everyday use, but also as "a springboard for renewal" (Fleras, 1993, p. 20). The Maori people have made language and culture preservation a top priority as they feel this will enable them to continue to grow and flourish as a proud indigenous group. Family and friends are viewed as capable of transmitting not only knowledge of the ancestral language, but also knowledge of the culture itself. Family reading circles, where parents and older siblings read Maori books to young students, are commonplace. Furthermore, parents and community members are often invited into the preschool classroom in order to demonstrate traditional cultural practices such as basket making. Maori elders are viewed as priceless sources of knowledge regarding traditional practices and values, and are a crucial component in ensuring a reconciliation of the intergeneration gap often found in modern-day indigenous communities. Elders are asked to share traditional stories with the preschoolers and question and answer periods or discussions are encouraged.

The indigenous population in New Zealand is a fairly homogeneous group to which many resources are accorded, therefore enabling a more generalizable education approach. Although this situation is not entirely applicable to that of FN in Canada, there is much to be learned from such an extraordinary commitment. The notion of "language nests" utilized among the Maori provides a good model for the use of both the family and the community within the larger schooling experience (Fleras, 1993). Within a given FN program, it is essential that parents and elders be included in the instruction of students in order to provide both knowledge and experience, all the while, helping to reconcile the problems which exist between generations. Furthermore, the community is capable of providing both strength and resources to a program in the way of goods, services and ideas.

#### Sámi (Norway)

The paper continues with a Norwegian model of language and culture education. "The Sámi Way" is a holistic pedagogical approach which holds Sámi cultural ideas and values in the highest regard, with emphasis on oral ways of teaching values, ethics and a traditional way of life, as well as the use of the ancestral language. In Norway, power has been returned to a once-oppressed group,

"and the result is a revitalization of Sámi identity and a consciousness of cultural unity and uniqueness. Above all, there is a sense that the Sámi themselves are now the agents of their own emancipation" (Corson, 1996, p. 100).

In the case of the Sámi, policies and funding have been directed toward a single group, resulting in a homogeneous education context, enabling instruction,

programs and policies to address one single language, and one single culture much like the case of the Maori (Jordan, 1986). This indigenous population enjoys major political and economic clout within the Norwegian nation as the language is recognized as an official one. This allows for a positive educational climate in which the culture and language of the group in question is valued and deemed an important one.

Like FN in Canada, the Sámi have dealt with destructive assimilation practices in the past. However, today, within the greater Norwegian community, it has been noted that there are far less social problems and prejudices associated with the Sámi due to the education and language rights that have been attributed to them (Corson, 1996). This would seem to imply that because this indigenous group has been granted official status within the country, it is no longer perceived as being inferior to the dominant culture group. Similarly, the cultures and languages of FN communities in Canada can act as promising means of redefinition of local relations between Natives and non-Natives if official-status were to be granted to FN languages. How would the languages be chosen? Which ones would be rejected and on what basis? Can this country accord official language status to all FN languages, viable or not? Perhaps the first step is to acknowledge the contributions made by FN in Canada, and continue to work to rectify the damage to which the state has helped to create.

#### Inuit (Canada)

For more than a decade, the implementation of a cultural-based program in Inuit schools has helped to ensure the integration of educational development, alongside fundamental survival issues faced by the Inuit in Arctic

Canada: language, identity, self-determination and cultural evolution in a modern-day context. In the case of the Inuit, educators are at the centre of both the development of the program as well as its implementation. The process is one of a continuous development of Inuit teachers and educators, not simply a quick program design and implementation strategy. Such a process ensures an Inuit education

“based not just on cultural content, but on the world view, social roles and interactive style of the indigenous culture” (Stairs, 1988, p. 311).

However, it must be stated that the situation of the Inuit is quite different from that of many FN in Canada as the former’s population has been much more isolated from southern North American culture than have most, if not all, FN on the continent (Stairs, 1988). Between the relative historical and geographical isolation of the Inuit, and the large number of speakers of Inuktitut, the ancestral language is alive and well. In fact, according to Norris (1998) it is one of the most viable indigenous languages in the world today.

Moreover, the school boards in question are Inuit-controlled and are empowered to design curricula as well as choosing the language of instruction in the classroom. Northern boards also have the added luxury of being able to choose staff without constraints of provincial qualifications. Inuit teachers are chosen according to community standards and are trained in the home environment so as not to be trained in southern contexts and within a southern value system. Similar selection and training of teachers is applicable to FN contexts, particularly in communities close to large urban centres, where southern influence is already an overwhelming and powerful

assimilating force.

Although such an impressive situation can serve as a model for language and culture programs to be used in FN communities further south, one must be aware of the intrinsic differences between the Inuit situation and that of more southern FN communities. The first language of the Inuit, for the most part, is that of Inuktitut, while FN communities are often faced with an ancestral language that is approached as a second language, due to depleting mother tongue skills. As achieved by the Inuit in Arctic Canada, the education system need be one that is what Stairs (1988) refers to as culturally-based pedagogy, as explained previously in this section. In the case of FN, what is truly necessary is a FN-run program which provides a holistic approach where students are saturated with FN language, knowledge, values, customs and beliefs: a FN way of life.

#### **Navajo (United States)**

The Navajo Nation, in Arizona, has developed and implemented a curriculum which advocates teaching both modern aspects (such as high technology) and the traditional (such as beadwork), thus preparing students for jobs in the next century all the while honouring and preserving their traditional culture and language.

The program essentially exposes students exclusively to the Navajo language for the first few years of their schooling experience, then slowly reduces the number of hours of exposure to the mother tongue in the following years, thus ensuring a sound base in the language before incorporating the use of the dominant language, in this case English. The curriculum is a fine example of what Cummins (1989) has deemed an additive rather than a subtractive educational experience. The Navajo language

and culture is valued and deemed important in various contexts, not viewed as simply an additional course or an elective. Such a program teaches aspects of both the dominant language and culture, as well as those of the native language and culture.

Similar to the case of the Inuit, with regard to staffing issues, language teachers are hired on a local level, with or without degrees or formal qualifications. This is a way to ensure that those most familiar with both the language and the culture are teaching the students, not necessarily those with academic achievements obtained vis à vis the dominant culture’s education standards. After obtaining a position, however, teachers are required to take courses leading to relevant education degrees: this is done in order to ensure a means to achieve language revival and maintenance, all the while guaranteeing academic content is being relayed in an adequate fashion.

The success of the program is also the result of parental involvement. A parent advisory committee organises cultural events, serves community dinners, and adds to the overall community feel of the school. Such events provide opportunities for students, their families and friends to socialize in Navajo circles. Because parents play such a crucial role in the development of their children, it is encouraged that, where possible, parents and community members continue to study and promote the language in question in order to better demonstrate both its validity and value to the younger generation. A new found sense of empowerment on the part of the parents will undoubtedly encourage school-aged children to follow in the footsteps of their proud family and community members.



## Current Culture and Language Programs in FN Communities in Canada

The decline in FN language proficiency can be largely attributed to the effects of the residential school system. Federal educational policy, which once used the schools as instruments of assimilation, punishing children for speaking their own languages, now supports the preservation of FN languages to some degree. Today, as FN strive toward regaining control of their education systems, schools in FN communities are viewed by its members as one of the institutions possessing the capability of developing and/or maintaining the ancestral language of a given population. Educators and administrators alike are attempting to preserve, at times with great difficulty, what little mother tongue language ability students in FN communities may have. FN communities across the country are experimenting with language and culture programs, and a substantial percentage of FN students are beginning to receive some form of FN language instruction. This is an enormous, difficult task, as teachers are often ill-equipped to teach groups of second language learners (i.e. lack of tools, lack of instructional materials, etc.) or lack knowledge of the FN language themselves.

### Successful FN Programs

#### Cree of Waskaganish

A new FN school system is emerging in the community of Waskaganish, Quebec, located on the eastern shore of James Bay. In the struggle to maintain both their language and their culture, all the while emphasizing the process of acquiring academic proficiency, the Cree of Waskaganish are aiming at schooling the students of their community entirely in Cree during the first few grades.

The immersion program was implemented by the Kativik School Board as a means to prevent the ultimate loss of Cree language proficiency and general linguistic competence among its speakers, and is adapted entirely to the community's needs and concerns (Feurer, 1993).

Before the development and implementation of the program began, community members were asked to assess the situation of the Cree language. Although members of the community felt that the language was still quite strong in comparison to other FN languages in Canada, all measures possible were to be taken in order to preserve and develop the language within the Cree community. Community support was overwhelming, and the issue of the preservation of the ancestral language was a top priority within the Cree Nation. Such a commitment to the development and maintenance of the language allows for a positive and supportive environment in which to proceed with an implementation.

Although the long term impact of the undertaking is not yet known, it is evident that there have been a great deal of positive effects both on the students, as well as the community as a whole. Reading ability and reading comprehension have greatly increased among the students, while community members have noticed a significant increase in the use of the Cree language by the student population in various social settings. Students and parents, children and adults are becoming more aware of the importance of their ancestral language, and they are beginning to work toward ensuring that it is maintained and further developed to the best of the community's ability.

Unfortunately, there are some drawbacks to the implementation

of such a language program within the larger North American context:

1. there is a lack of Cree teachers;
2. there is a lack of instructional materials available in Cree;
3. there is a concern regarding the issue of maintaining long term teacher support; and
4. southern curriculum developers may lack Cree cultural sensitivity (Feurer, 1993).

Despite some obstacles yet to be overcome, this particular situation is a positive look at how a FN community in the North is taking control of their school, and ultimately of their community's future. The James Bay Cree are creating a new and improved schooling environment that more closely addresses the needs and wishes of the community, as opposed to those of the North American society. The decision to implement mother tongue instruction can be seen in a much larger context than the preservation and maintenance of the language. It is also potentially a "vehicle for strengthening self-identity and increasing academic success" (McAlpine & Herodier, 1994, p. 137). By sustaining a culturally rich environment for students to live in and learn from, this Cree community is providing a more congruent context for Cree ways of teaching, learning, and most importantly, living.

### Mohawk of Kahnawake

Over the last century, members of the Mohawk Nation have seen a significant decline in the use of their ancestral language. In order to confront the problem of language disintegration, and to help ensure that future generations of Mohawk people will continue to thrive with their language, culture and traditions intact, the Kahnawake community, which is located a short distance from Montreal, has

implemented an immersion program within its school. More than half the students in Kahnawake are currently being schooled entirely in Mohawk from preschool to the third grade, then at sixty percent from grades four through six. The Mohawk immersion program is now oversubscribed, and only a lack of trained Mohawk teachers prevents more students from attending this program (Hoover, 1992).

In addition, the program is currently a model for other FN communities in Canada, particularly those which face the added pressure of existing in close proximity to large urban centres which further exposes them to the detrimental effects of assimilation. The Kahnawake community has demonstrated a great will and much effort to maintain the Mohawk language, particularly since it is located less than twenty minutes from downtown Montreal. Much of the reason why the language has even survived thus far, is due to the importance attributed to it within the community. Further to the language being used in the school setting, it is used in a variety of social contexts, mainly band council meetings, cultural ceremonies and celebrations, and other various social gatherings.

What is particularly impressive about the immersion program, the community efforts and the use of the ancestral language, is that the 50-year trend of declining use of Mohawk in Kahnawake has been reversed over the last ten years. Students are now able to communicate orally and in writing, in a variety of situations, and to various audiences. For example, older students are encouraged to write short stories or create storybooks in Mohawk, which are later read by the younger students. Moreover, graduates of the immersion program are encouraged to deliver

a commencement speech in the ancestral language, a practice that is welcomed by both the students and the members of the Kahnawake community. The community has no illusions about the ease with which the ancestral language can be rejuvenated, yet it continues to promote, encourage and value the language, and consequently, the future of a culture and of a people.

### Discussion and Recommendations

The aforementioned examples of beneficial FN language and culture programs in Canada and abroad indicate that FN (and indigenous) communities are ready and willing to exert every effort in order to work toward eliminating assimilatory practices and the harmful disintegration of their languages and cultures. FN communities need to be responsible for the implementation and control of their own education systems in order to accurately convey their own linguistic and cultural experiences in the classroom.

In order to ensure the success of such culture and language (bilingual or immersion) programs in FN communities, there are also more subtle dangers at work which need to be acknowledged and taken into consideration. The social and political structure of Canadian society at large requires a major adjustment: attitudes toward FN peoples, their cultures, values and languages need to be ameliorated.

"Societal factors often contribute to the decline of languages. Without doubt, the forces of dominant languages and modernization exert a strong influence on any minority language" (Norris, 1998, p. 8).

Because of tremendous pressures (past and present) exerted by mainstream society on FN communities to "assimilate or

die", there has been an unfortunate lack of pride in, and knowledge of, their respective languages and cultures. In many ways, this lack of a feeling of self-worth has disabled numerous FN communities with regard to the education of their peoples.

"Although Canada's action is a desirable and necessary recognition of the importance of French and English to this country, our policy makers' failure to give some matching legitimacy to the country's Aboriginal languages seems unjust" (Corson, 1996, p. 85).

FN control over their own schools and education practices are required in order to put a stop to this rapid erosion of language. This can only be achieved when FN languages are viewed as being endangered, and when the Federal government gives this issue its rightful place on the national agenda. Without a doubt,

"until broader issues pertaining to Aboriginal self-government are constitutionally resolved, the crisis in Aboriginal language education will persist" (Fleras, 1993, p. 31).

It is extremely difficult to outline possible solutions to a question of such great magnitude. The issue of FN language education is such a complex and individualized one that it is impossible to know what program would best suit a community without being, oneself, part of that very community. However, in recent years, around the globe, there has been a great deal done in the way of Indigenous education. In looking at some of the tremendous contributions given to us by our Indigenous friends throughout the world (i.e. the Sámi, the Maori, the Inuit, the Navajo), we can begin to build on an already existing and effective means of educating our precious student population.

In more practical terms, and

aside from the issues of funding and of a revamping of social and political structures, what is required for the effective development and implementation of a culturally and linguistically relevant FN education program is:

1. band/community control over program planning, implementation and evaluation;
2. community support, family involvement and participation; and
3. adequate teacher training and materials development.

Let us hope that new innovations in pedagogy, as well as the sheer will of FN communities, will allow for more comprehensive and culturally-based education systems, in order to regain control over an important resource that has been taken from us for too long.

### Mechanisms for Change

#### Materials Development

1. The ideal developers and teachers are members of the community who possess knowledge of both the language and the culture of the said First Nation.
2. Classroom and administrative materials which are sensitive to a specific FN language and culture are an essential component of any new implementation.
3. Texts and other resource materials need to incorporate scenarios and examples that are contextually relevant and meaningful to the FN learner.

### Agents of Change

#### Role of the Family

1. As more and more schools are being erected in and controlled by FN communities, community members must have a say in both the language of instruction as well as the

culturally relevant content to be delivered in schools (Brady, 1995).

2. It is encouraged that, where possible, parents and community members continue to study and promote the FN language in question in order to better demonstrate both its validity and value to the younger generation.
3. It is from the example of his family that a young child will develop a pattern of human conduct and social interaction characteristic of his particular culture.
4. It is beneficial to the FN student that his or her parents be highly-motivated and enroll in adult ancestral language programs in order to assist these students in the literacy process. By demonstrating the use and the validity of the FN language in the family environment, parents are essentially validating the culture of an entire FN population.

#### Role of the Community

1. Communities must begin, or continue to, support and value the preservation of both the ancestral language and culture to a great extent (Taaffe & Fox, 1989).
2. The curriculum in FN schools must be built along traditional lines. Members of the community must be invited and encouraged to participate in curriculum development for their local schools.
3. With an entire community mobilized, eager to valorize and promote cultural and linguistic heritage, Native instruction in early grades might ultimately further, on one hand, the process of scholarization (i.e. second-language acquisition) and, on the other, help assure a high level of FN language proficiency not only in but also

outside the school, in the community at large. (Feurer, 1993)

4. The community must actively seek to promote and validate the use of the ancestral language as well as traditional activities. Positive initiatives should be taken to use the mother tongue in the public life of the community.

#### Role of the School

1. The school environment must be an extension of the home environment. Language heard in the home must also be heard, used and valued within the school.
2. An emphasis should be placed on traditional ways of teaching and learning that are specific to the community in question. Informal learning practices such as the experiential approach should be emphasized and used.
3. Schools in FN communities must strive to create a bicultural curriculum, one which takes into account both mainstream culture and that of the said community (Leavitt, 1993). Such a curriculum helps students feel as though the classroom is a natural part of their lives, and allows them to move freely, and without reservation, between the two cultures if they so choose.
4. The school calendar must reflect the commitment to fostering the traditional experience.

### Conclusion

Developing and implementing a culturally-relevant pedagogy is important, if not crucial, for FN students across Canada. Educational strategies which assist in the learning of traditional language, knowledge and practices must be developed in order to validate and support all aspects of

a child's culture in the classroom, and to promote traditional ways inside and outside Aboriginal communities. We must provide FN students with a learning environment that is congruent to home rearing practices, while equipping them with skills and knowledge that will enable such students to participate in the larger Canadian society if they so choose. Culturally-relevant curricula and pedagogical practices in FN schools will help to better foster and/or ensure:

1. a positive self-concept for FN youth;
2. a constructive and accurate sense of cultural identity;
3. better attendance records in schools;
4. the social and academic success of students;
5. an appreciation of indigenous knowledge and practices; and
6. a will to enhance and maintain traditional culture and ways.

Clearly, education in FN communities is as distinctive as are those communities and their languages. With more than fifty FN languages used in Canada in more than three hundred FN reserve communities, the diversity of FN cultures and communities is immense. Provincial governments have controlled their own education and curricula for the last century, and it is difficult, if not impossible, to expect FN peoples to achieve complete change in twenty years. The questions about FN education continue, the debate and doubts linger, and the funds and resources to achieve new ends continue to dwindle. Contradiction and incoherence will inevitably arise, yet are indispensable to the successful transformation of FN education. One must be mindful of this fact, not allowing fear and doubt about confusion and incoherence to lead us to structures and systems that

resemble the old assimilation models. FN communities cannot rely on old models of eurocentric education to transform themselves. We must search beyond.

#### Note

1. A number of articles have been published on the education system of the Inuit in Canada (Stairs, 1988; Stairs, 1994; Crago, Annahatak and Ningiuruvik, 1993) as well as the education programs of other Indigenous groups throughout the world, such as the Maori of New Zealand and the Sámi of Norway (Corson, 1996; Fleras, 1993; Jordan, 1986).

#### References

- Battiste, M. and J. Barman. (1995). *FN Education in Canada: The Circle Unfolds*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press.
- Bigelow, B. (1995). "Discovering Columbus: Rereading the Past." In D. Levine, ed., *Rethinking Schools* (pp. 61-68). New York: The New Press.
- Boseker, B. J. (1994). "The Disappearance of American Indian Languages." *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 15 (2-3), 147-160.
- Brady, P. (1995). "Two Policy Approaches to Native Education: Can Reform be Legislated?" *Canadian Journal of Education*, 20 (3), 349-366.
- Corson, D. (1996). "Official-Language Minority and Aboriginal First-Language Education: Implications of Norway's Sámi Language Act for Canada." *Canadian Journal of Education*, 21 (1), 84-104.
- Crago, M., Annahatak, B. and L. Ningiuruvik. (1993). Changing Patterns of Language Socialization in Inuit Homes. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 24 (3), 205-223.
- Cummins, J. (1989). *Empowering Minority Students*. Sacramento: California Association for Bilingual Education.
- Drapeau, L. (1993). "Le français et les langues autochtones au Québec: Quelle coexistence?" *Québec Français*, 3 (90), 44-47.
- Feurer, H. (1993). "Beyond Multilingual Education: The Cree of Waskaganish." *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 20 (1), 87-95.
- Fleras, A. (1993). "Preschooling with a Cultural Difference: A Maori Language Education Program in New Zealand." In S. Morris, K. McLeod and M. Danese (Eds.), *Aboriginal Languages and Education: The Canadian Experience* (pp. 17-35). Oakville: Mosaic Press.
- Haig-Brown, C. (1992). "Two Worlds Together: Contradiction and Curriculum in FN Adult Science Education." *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 26 (2), 193-212.
- Heit, M. and H. Blair. (1993) "Language Needs and Characteristics of Saskatchewan Indian and Métis Students: Implications for Educators." In S. Morris, K. McLeod and M. Danesi (Eds.), *Aboriginal Languages and Education: The Canadian Experience* (pp. 103-128). Oakville: Mosaic Press.
- Heyman, R. D. (1984). "Language Use and School Performance in a Native Classroom." *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies*, 4 (1), 11-28.
- Hoover, M. L. (1992). "The Revival of the Mohawk Language in Kahnawake." *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies*, 12 (2), 269-282.
- Jordan, D. F. (1986). "Education and the Reclaiming of Identity: Rights and Claims of Canadian Indians, Norwegian Sámi, and Australian Aborigines." In J. R. Ponting, ed., *Arduous Journey: Canadian Indians and Decolonization* (pp. 260-283). Toronto: McClelland and Stewart.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1994). "Toward a Theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy." *American Education Research Journal*, 35 (2), 465-491.
- LaRose, F. (1991). "Learning processes and knowledge transfer in a Native bush-oriented society: Implications for schooling." *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 18 (1), 81-91.
- Leavitt, R. M. (1993). "Language and Cultural Context in Native Education." In S. Morris, K. McLeod and M. Danesi (Eds.), *Aboriginal Languages and Education: The Canadian Experience* (pp. 1-15). Oakville: Mosaic Press.
- Maina, F. (1997). "Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: FN Education in Canada." *Canadian Journal of Native Studies*, 17 (2), 293-314.
- McAlpine, L. and D. Herodier. (1994). "Schooling as a Vehicle for Aboriginal Language Maintenance: Implementing Cree as the Language of Instruction in Northern Quebec." *Canadian Journal of Education*, 19 (2), 128-141.

- McAlpine, L., Eriks-Brophy, A. and M. Crago. (1996). "Teaching Beliefs in Mohawk Classrooms: Issues of Language and Culture." *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 27 (3), 390-413.
- National Indian Brotherhood. (1972). *Indian Control of Indian Education*. Ottawa: National Indian Brotherhood.
- Norris, M. J. (1998). "Canada's Aboriginal Languages." *Canadian Social Trends*, 4 (1), 8-16.
- Ontario Ministry of Education. (1975). *People of Native Ancestry: A Resource Guide for the Primary and Junior Divisions*. Ottawa: Indian and Northern Affairs Canada.
- Ontario Ministry of Education and Training. (1999). *Native Languages: The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 9 and 10*. Toronto: Queen's Printer.
- Price, J. A. (1981). "The Viability of Indian Languages in Canada." *Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 1, (2), 339-346.
- Ross, J. A. (1979). "Language and the Mobilization of Ethnic Identity." In H.

Giles and B. St-Jacques, eds., *Language and Ethnic Relations* (pp. 1-14). Oxford: Pergamon Press.

- Smith, D. J. (1997). "Indigenous Peoples' Extended Family Relationships: A Source for Classroom Structure." *McGill Journal of Education*, 32 (2), 125-138.
- Stairs, A. (1988). "Beyond Cultural Inclusion: An Inuit Example of Indigenous Educational Development." In T. Skutnabb-Kangas and J. Cummins eds., *Minority Education* (pp. 308-327). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Stairs, A. (1993). "Learning Processes and Teaching Roles in Native Education: Cultural Base and Cultural Brokerage." In S. Morris, K. McLeod and M. Danesi (Eds.), *Aboriginal Languages and Education: The Canadian Experience* (pp. 85-101). Oakville: Mosaic Press.
- Stairs, A. (1994). "Indigenous Ways to go to School: Exploring Many Visions." *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 15 (1), 63-76.
- Taaffe, R. and J. Fox. (1989). *Recommendations for the Teaching of Three Languages at Kitigan Zibi School*,

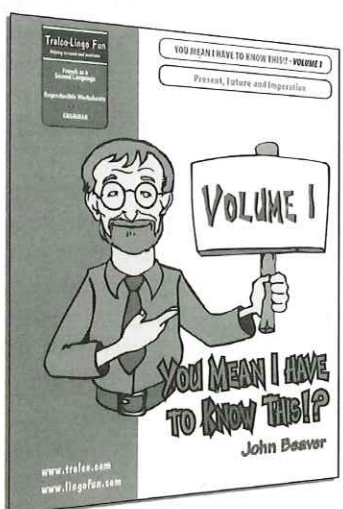
*Maniwaki*. Study commissioned by Kitigan Zibi Education Council: Unpublished manuscript, University of Ottawa.

**Claudia Patenaude** received her Master in Education degree from the University of Ottawa, in 1999. She recently worked in Learning and Development at *Indian and Northern Affairs Canada*, as well as among the Cree of Kashechewan First Nation as a Second Language teacher. She is currently teaching French as a Second Language and Native Studies in Bancroft, Ontario.

**Mosaic**

**Tralco-Lingo Fun**  
Helping to teach and motivate

Helping to  
**teach and**  
**motivate.**



**GO ONLINE FOR :**

- **E-BOOKS**  
Purchase, download and print various titles instantly, including the popular "You Mean I Have to KNOW This!?" and "You Mean I Have to DO This?!" series!
- **VIDEO CLIPS & SAMPLE PAGES**  
Preview videos, download and view sample pages of publications before purchasing
- **"FREE STUFF"**  
Download free sample pages from selected publications and use them in your classroom

**... and more!**

**www.tralco.com**

1-888-487-2526 • 905-575-5717

# Applause

## Learning Resources

85 Fernwood Lane  
Roslyn NY 11576-1431  
Tel. 1-800-277-5287  
Fax: 877-365-7484

[www.ApplauseLearning.com](http://www.ApplauseLearning.com)

Constance K. Knop

## Increasing Use of Target Language in Classroom Interactions

*The article presents strategies and activities that have been used successfully by foreign language teachers to increase target language use. By implementing these approaches in a systematic, progressive manner, teachers can gradually enable and empower their students to understand, interact and communicate in more classroom situations in the target language.*

In today's foreign language classroom, more and more teachers are focusing on developing students' communicative abilities. The Proficiency Guidelines developed by ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, 1985) and ACTFL's development of National Standards (1994) have promoted an emphasis on oral proficiency. Current textbooks and methodologies claim that proficiency is their goal in foreign language study. This goal is in line with surveys of foreign language students which consistently find that the main reason why students enroll in a foreign language course is to learn to communicate in that language (Arendt and Hallock, 1979). Indeed, oral proficiency seems to be commonly accepted as a major goal of most foreign language programs throughout the United States.

There is a good deal of evidence to suggest that the more foreign language input learners are exposed to, the greater will be their proficiency. Research and theory on second-language acquisition indicate that students' linguistic growth is related to the amount of time spent with the language in meaningful exposure to it. Krashen (1982) refers to this as "comprehensible input". Opportunities to communicate in that language are also cited as important to developing oral

proficiency. Met and Rhodes note that

"both research and experiential data suggest that the amount of time spent on language learning and the intensity of the experience have significant effects on the acquisition of significant levels of foreign language proficiency" (1990, p. 438).

Intensity refers to time on task and use of the target language for communication. Thus, it is hypothesized that the more students hear the target language in meaning-filled contexts and the more they use it in realistic interactions, the greater will be their linguistic growth. Rivers explains that

"students [...] achieve facility in using a language when their attention is focused on conveying and receiving authentic messages – messages that contain information of interest to speaker and listener in a situation of importance to both – that is, through interaction [...] interactions between people who have something to say" (Wilga Rivers quoted in Curtain and Pesola, 1994, p. 117).

Clearly, travel abroad and immersion experiences would greatly affect language acquisition. But, for the majority of our students, foreign travel and living abroad are not easily accessible. Instead, the foreign language

more target language in class express concerns. Some teachers question how one can expect first year students to understand and use the language. In response, one might ask: What is so difficult in the first-year curriculum that students cannot understand the interactions and the material in the target language? The vocabulary and grammar in first year are very concrete and can easily be acted out or visualized. As for classroom routines (e.g., taking attendance, asking students to open their books or take out a piece of paper, etc.), students can infer the meaning of target language utterances from their experiences in these routines in other classes. Moreover, if students are not trained and expected to use the target language starting in first year, they are very resistant to using it in succeeding years.

*It is important for teachers to consider how they can increase the use of the target language in classroom interactions so as to promote students' oral proficiency.*

In contrast, other teachers state that they expect students to hear, understand and use the target language exclusively at all times from the first day of instruction. However, they do not always provide the students with the wherewithal to comprehend and produce the target language in classroom interactions. Since very few textbooks present classroom-related language or activities to help students understand target language use, it is crucial that teachers plan ways of enabling students to understand and use more target language in classroom interactions.

### I. Developing "Language Ladders"

The "language ladder" is one

classroom is the environment in which they are most likely to need the language to communicate. Thus, it is important for foreign language teachers to consider how they can increase the use of the target language in classroom interactions so as to promote students' oral proficiency. The National Association of District Supervisors of the United States recognizes the importance of the target language as the medium of instruction. In its publication, "Characteristics of Effective Foreign Language Instruction Guidelines" (1992), the Association has listed these principles as its first two characteristics of effective instruction:

- The teacher uses the target language extensively, encouraging the students to do so.
- The teacher provides opportunities to communicate in the target language in meaningful, purposeful activities that simulate real-life situations.

*The main reason why students enroll in a foreign language course is to learn to communicate in that language.*

However, not all teachers are committed to using the target language for classroom instruction and interactions. For example, a recent survey of foreign language teachers in Illinois found that while there was a relatively high amount of language use reported by elementary teachers (70%), there is a

"relatively low amount of teacher use of the target language in junior high and first and second year high school classes. That was only about 50% at these levels with many citing as the reason a focus on grammar and the need to cover the material in the textbook." (Connor, 1995, p. 7)

Even teachers who wish to use

effective strategy for systematically building students' use of the target language in the classroom. A "language ladder" consists of a set of commonly used classroom expressions focused on a common classroom function – that is, a communicative interaction typically used in class, such as "expressing confusion". Each day the teacher introduces one expression related to that function which students are expected to learn and use henceforth in classroom activities. The expression could be written on a piece of construction paper with the English meaning on the back.

The teacher presents the target language expression to the students, repeating it in the target language and also showing its English meaning two or three times while saying it. Adding a gesture and emotive quality whenever appropriate would further reinforce the meaning and would wean the students away from needing the English equivalent. After teaching the expression, the teacher numbers it and posts it under a visual representing the function. The different expressions written on construction paper of various colors under the function creates the image of the rungs of a ladder – hence the name, "language ladder", used for this strategy.

1. No sé: *I don't know*
2. No comprendo:  
*I don't understand.*
3. Repita Ud., por favor:  
*Please repeat.*
4. Otra vez, por favor:  
*Once again, please.*
5. ¿Cómo?: *What?*

Once the expressions are posted, students are responsible for understanding and using them in class. Students could also copy them onto a separate page in their notebooks to reinforce them further. This gradual building of a language repertoire is not as overwhelming as suddenly

expecting students to use the target language at all times. Moreover, there is a sense of progress and achievement in mastering an expression a day and being able to communicate more and more in the target language. Since the expressions are numbered, the teacher can simply call out that number when students say a given expression in English. Experience has shown, however, that at least one student will always recall the target language expression and will cue others in the target language when they use the expression in English.

*If students are not trained and expected to use the target language starting in first year, they are very resistant to using it in succeeding years.*

To motivate students even further in learning the new example in the language ladder, some teachers use a "password" technique (Knop, 1994). In order to leave the room that day, students must say the expression to the teacher at the door. To avoid their simply reading it, one might take down the expression before class ends and also ask students to use a gesture or emotive quality when saying the expression to convey its meaning. If the teacher does not have time to stand at the door, alternative approaches to using the password strategy include:

1. Appointing a student monitor to whom others must say the password. The student typically is even more demanding than the teacher in insisting on accurate production of the expression.
2. Asking the whole class to give the utterance at the end of class as a closure activity for the day.
3. Having students turn to a partner to say and act out the expression (or even to two or

three partners) before they leave class.

### Creating Language Ladders

Once teachers become aware of the need to provide students with useful classroom language, they usually ask how they might go about developing language ladders. The following guidelines have proven useful for creating ladders that respond to students' communicative needs.

#### 1. Select a Common Function in a Classroom Context

Again, "functions" refer to communicative purposes we carry out through language. In the classroom, students carry out functions as they interact with the teacher and as they interact with each other. Thus, as a first step in creating a language ladder, teachers may first identify common student functions.

##### a. Functions in Student-to-Teacher/Teacher-to-Students Interactions

Since students are going to interact in the role of students each and every day of class, they need to learn expressions in the target language to carry out the communicative interactions that typify discourse between students and teachers. The state of Wisconsin's *A Guide to Curriculum Planning in Foreign Languages* (Grittner, 1985) identifies communicative functions needed by students as early as first year of study for "Basic Survival in the Classroom", including:

##### 1. Seeking information

What page is it?

Which exercise?

##### 2. Expressing confusion or lack of understanding

I don't know.

I don't understand.

Please repeat.

##### 3. Making excuses

My homework is at home.

I was sick.

##### 4. Asking permission

May I go to my locker?

May I go to the bathroom?

##### 5. Making small-talk and responding realistically to basic questions about health, weather, time

I'm fine.

It's nice out.

The guide also identifies functions carried out by teachers that students need to understand (and which they may eventually use with each other), such as:

##### 1. Exchanging greetings and leave-takings.

##### 2. Giving directions

Open your books, please.

Take out a sheet of paper, please.

##### 3. Praising and encouraging

Good work!

You're doing well!

It's an easy test.)

##### 4. Chastising or disciplining (Please pay attention. Please don't speak English.)

After identifying common classroom interactions, one could choose a function for the week and introduce it in a classroom context. For example, "complaining" is a common student function. One could announce that there was a test that day and when students begin their usual litany of complaining in English, the teacher could say in the target language: "You need this expression" and then teach that day's sample for the function of complaining, posting it under a visual of a test and a frowning face (or even the word "complaining" in the target language) to show the function. On succeeding days, additional expressions would be added. Note that during the

following week, one could teach the function of "expressing pleasure" or "expressing gratitude", to encourage positive expressions in class as well as provide antonyms for complaining which would further reinforce its meaning.

##### b. Functions in Student-to-Student Interactions

In interacting with each other, students often use language to express feelings and emotions. Indeed, adolescents' speech is replete with emotive language.

Unfortunately, textbooks materials do not always provide a full range of examples for students to express their affective needs. Thus, when an emotive interjection or rejoinder does occur in curricular materials, we could exploit and expand upon it to meet students' linguistic needs for self-expression.

For example, if students have learned "Chic alors!" in a dialogue or reading passage, one might first identify the function by asking or explaining why it was used (*On dit - "Chic alors" si on est content* You use "Chic alors!" if you are happy.) Then one could set up several contexts in the target language to which students would respond "Chic alors!" (E.g., There's no homework tonight/no test this week.) Finally, the teacher could indicate that there are other ways of expressing contentment and introduce variations on the function, such as "Chouette! Sensas! Super! Hypercool!" The following week the teacher could teach a language ladder with the function of expressing displeasure as a means of providing students with alternatives for expressing feelings. In this way, students expand their range of possibilities for expressing emotions and for interacting with each other.

Other common student-to-student functions include:



1. *Expressing likes and dislikes* (which could be taught in the context of curricular content, such as food or pastimes)
2. *Expressing agreement and disagreement* (which could be taught as a means of reacting to others' expressions of likes/dislikes in personalized question-answer sessions)
3. *Giving compliments* about clothing or appearance
4. *Inviting someone* to one's house, to a movie
5. *Accepting or refusing an invitation* (to be taught as a follow-up to the inviting functions)

**2. Select 5-6 Encodings to Carry out the Function in a Given Context**

Once functions have been identified, they need to be set in a context before one selects "encodings" (i.e., expressions for carrying out the function). For example, "making excuses" is a function that students carry out quite often but what they would say depends on the situation in which they are carrying out that function. They could make excuses about

1. why they don't have their homework,
2. why they are late to class,
3. why they didn't do well on a test or
4. why they were absent.

Clearly the encodings for the function would change according to the situation. Thus, it is important to decide on both a function and a context before deciding on expressions to teach in the language ladder.

Let us say that we have decided to teach the function of "expressing surprise" and we have also chosen a context: the teacher is going to give a unit exam today. Now we need to select encodings

for the function, expressions that carry it out. Some possibilities are:

**French**

1. Ça alors!
2. Sans blague!
3. C'est vrai?
4. Ce n'est pas vrai!
5. Ce n'est pas croyable!
6. Ça m'étonne!

**German**

1. Ach so:
2. Das ist ja toll!
3. Nicht zu glauben!
4. Sie machen wohl Spass!
5. Was Sie nicht sagen!
6. Ach du liebe Zeit!

**Spanish**

1. ¿De veras?
2. ¡Caramba!
3. ¡Híjole!
4. ¡Dios mío!
5. ¡No lo creo!
6. ¡No me digas!

One could try to arrange the presentation of the expressions by "register" level, going from mild surprise to stronger surprise, as shown in the French ladder. This provides an additional meaning reinforcer for helping students recall the expressions.

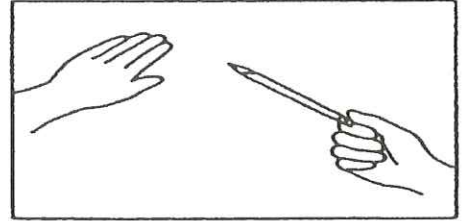
**3. Visualize the Context Function and/or Encodings**

As another way of helping students understand and remember meaning, we could visualize the language ladder. For "expressing surprise", one teacher wrote *Surprise!!* (in French) across a red banner which she placed in the middle of her bulletin board. Then she cut jagged shapes out of construction paper, writing the encodings on the various shapes and attaching yarn and a thumb tack to each one. When she taught the ladder, she tacked the end of the yarn for each expression into the *Surprise* banner, concretely linking them into the function of surprise. Other teachers have used these visualizations of language ladders. Examples of "Language

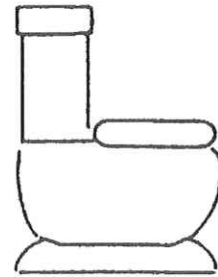
Ladders"

**1. Making Requests:**

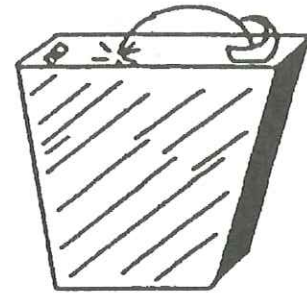
*Puis-je emprunter...  
... un crayon?  
... une feuille de papier ?*



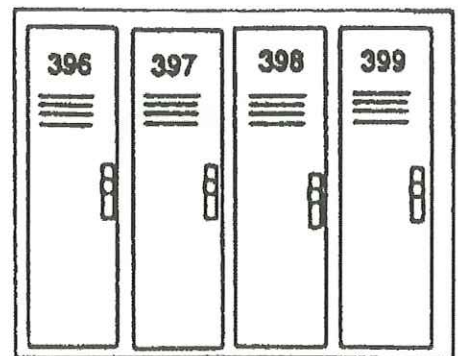
*Puis-je aller ...  
... aux toilettes?*



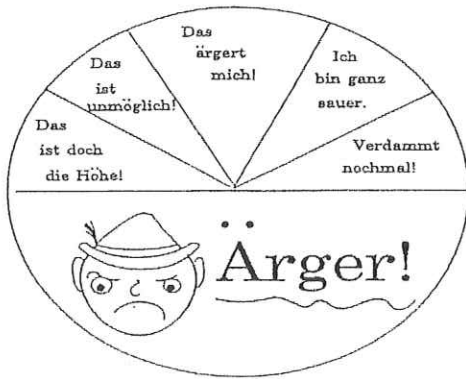
*... boire de l'eau ?*



*... à mon casier ?*

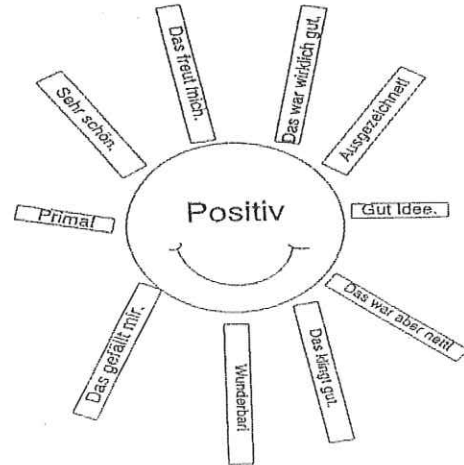


2. Expressing Anger



Das ist doch die Höhe!  
 Das ist unmöglich!  
 Das ärgert mich!  
 Ich bin ganz sauer.  
 Verdammt nochmal!

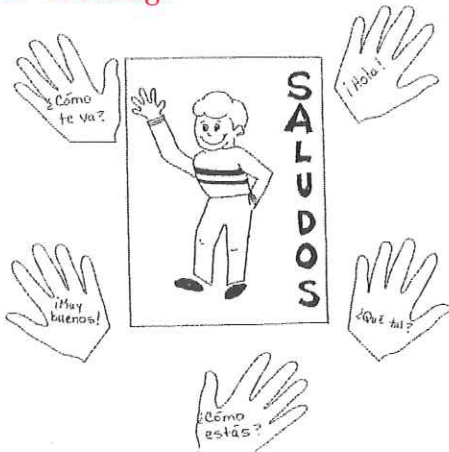
3. Expressing Approval



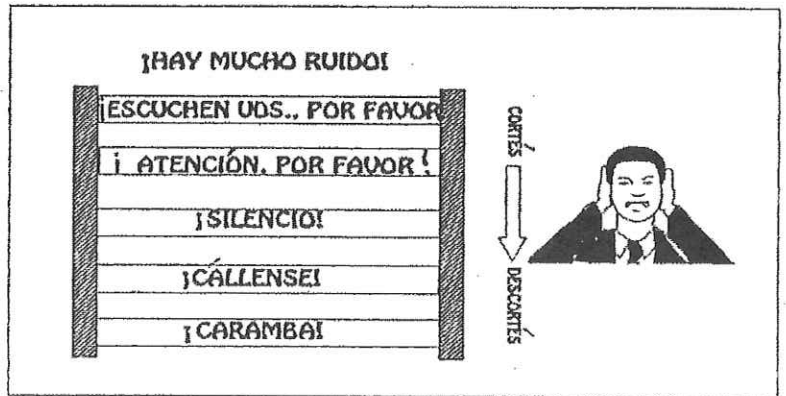
Prima!  
 Sehr schön.  
 Das freut mich.  
 Das war wirklich gut.  
 Ausgezeichnet!

Gut idee.  
 Das war aber nett!  
 Das klingt gut.

4. Greetings



5. Requesting Silence in Class



6. Making Excuses about Homework



Está en mi casa.      ¿ Mi tarea?  
 Mi perro la comió.      Está en mi armario.  
 No la terminé.

7. Accepting an Invitation (to go to the Movies)



Avec plaisir.      Chouette!  
 D'accord!      Pourquoi pas?  
 Bien, si tu veux.

## II. Outline Of Lesson Plan On The Board

Another way of helping students understand and use the target language is to put an outline of the lesson plan on the board. The outline would be written in the target language and can contain examples to be used in the activities. (Figure 1).

The written support on the outline helps many students better understand oral communication. Some students can guess at meaning when they see the written word (especially if it is a cognate) while others need the memory support of the written form. The outline can also be used for oral practice. The teacher could ask the students what the next activity is, encouraging attention and focus as well as building students' oral skills in classroom language. Finally, the written examples give students a model to follow in the activities.

Teachers have exploited the written lesson plan in the following ways:

### 1. At the Start of Class

For a choral warm-up and as a means of providing an advance organizer (advocated by Hunter, 1982, and others), one could ask students to read the outline aloud, either repeating after the teacher or reading it on their own. Students could also read the outline to each other in pairs. As an alternative, students could copy the plan to give them writing practice. This activity also works well in settling the class down and getting everyone on task. Many students have reported using this daily written plan as part of their review before tests. Teachers have also asked anyone who was absent to obtain copies of the plans from other students for the days that were missed.

### 2. During Class

In proceeding from one activity to

### The Lesson Outline

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. Révision du dialogue,<br>"Au Café"  | 1. Review the Dialogue,<br>"At the café"   |
| 2. Un nouveau verb: prendre<br>Que prenez-vous au café?  | 2. A new verb: prendre<br>What do you order (take) in a<br>café?   |
| 3. Expressions de quantité:<br>Je prends du pain.<br>Je prends beaucoup de<br>pain.                                      | 3. Expressions of quantity:<br>I take some bread.<br>I take a lot of bread.<br>I take a little bread.                  |
| 4. Exercice écrit:<br>Expressions de quantité  | 4. Written exercise:<br>Expression of quantity   |
| 5. Le négatif:<br>Je prends du pain.<br>Je ne prends pas de pain.<br>Je prends du beurre.<br>Je ne prends pas de beurre. | 5. The negative:<br>I take some bread.<br>I do not take any bread.<br>I take some butter.<br>I do not take any butter. |
| 6. Un jeu: Jacques dit...  | 6. A Game: Simon Says...   |

Figure 1

the next, a teacher could use the outline for closure and transition. E.g., after completing an activity on food vocabulary, one could ask, "Alors, C'est terminé, le vocabulaire sur la nourriture? Vous avez dit ce que vous préférez commander au restaurant?" (So we've finished the food vocabulary? You've said what you prefer to order in a restaurant?). After students have said "yes", the teacher (or a student) could check off or erase that item on the outline, visually showing completion and progress, and then ask, "What's next?", leading students to announce the next activity. Some teachers use the strategy of "correct the teacher" or "rubbishing" with the outline (Rivers, 1988), announcing the next activity incorrectly (e.g., reading the topic for number 5 when the class is really ready for the second activity) and asking students if that's correct or not.

Students will listen more actively and get more involved when they have to decide if the teacher is following the outline appropriately.

### 3. At the End of Class

For closure on the entire lesson, students could read aloud – chorally or with a partner—all the activities completed that day, providing students with more oral practice and also a sense of accomplishment. One could also ask students which of the completed activities was their favorite or which one they enjoyed most (a forced choice—all students MUST choose one), giving students the opportunity to state their preferences and allowing the teacher to take an informal survey on students' reactions to activities.

Some teachers are unable to write their plan on the board due to limited board space, back-to-back classes, or lack of access to the room in which they teach.

Alternatives they have used then include writing the plan ahead of time on an overhead transparency or on easel paper or else having a student write the plan on the board while they begin the class session.

In summary, providing an outline of the lesson plan on the board in the target language enables students to understand more readily what teachers are saying by giving students written and memory support and by encouraging their focus and attention. The written plan can be exploited for oral and written practice throughout the class hour, building students' use of the target language for classroom activities.

### III. "Informal Pair" Interactions

Both research (Nerenz and Knop, 1982; Gaies, 1985) and classroom practice (Curtain and Pesola, 1994; Knop, 1994; Snyder, 1994) have shown that students' use of the target language may be increased through student-to-student pair interactions. Some teachers are reluctant to use pair work in class as they envision fairly lengthy application activities, such as the writing of original dialogues, skits or other creative oral assignments. To save time while still maximizing student practice, Nerenz and Knop have suggested the use of "informal pair" activities (1982, p. 53). Students are asked to turn to a partner and to carry out a brief interaction, typically 30 seconds to one or two minutes. These interactions may be used several times in a class session during the practice phase of any activity or in its communicative phase. Some possibilities for informal pairs in the practice phase using them during:

#### *Warm-Ups:*

After answering a few questions the warm-up, students repeat the teacher's questions (or read them

off the board) and then turn to a partner to ask and answer the questions of each other.

#### *Study of new verbs:*

After hearing the teacher use the "you" form to elicit "I" answers, students repeat the "you" form question and then turn to ask and answer the question of a partner.

#### *Learning of a dialogue:*

After learning two lines of dialogue that are linked in discourse (e.g., "I have a headache." – "That's too bad."), students say and act out the lines with a partner.

#### *Vocabulary study:*

After practicing 3-4 items in whole group setting, students turn to a partner and recite the items (pointing to visuals or using gestures). – Grammar work: For closure after a pattern practice on singular/plural forms of the definite articles, students turn to a partner and recite the articles. Or, after learning the forms of a new verb in a whole sentence, students summarize the verb forms with a partner. -. Dictations: Using a dictation made up by the teacher, students give each other a practice dictation, providing practice on listening, speaking, reading and writing skills.

Informal pairs may also be used at the end of a practice activity, moving it to a communicative phase and carrying out various functions related to the content. Some functions at the novice and intermediate level (as listed in the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines, 1986) and sample content might include:

#### *Naming:*

After working on clothing vocabulary, students turn to a partner and say as many articles of clothing that they can, pointing to clothing work by other students.

#### *Expressing Preferences:*

After studying days of the week,

students tell a partner two days of the week that they like and two days that they hate. Students could easily carry out this function on almost any of the vocabulary learned early in the first year, such as colors, months, classes, sports and other pastimes, etc.

#### *Describing:*

Use 3-4 adjectives to describe to your partner your father/mother/teacher/best friend.

#### *Sharing Information:*

Tell your partner 2-3 things that you're going to do this week-end (or that you did last week-end, depending on what tenses were taught or reviewed in the practice phase).

Informal pair interactions are useful for many reasons. In addition to maximizing students' practice and increasing their use of the target language, work in informal pairs reduces students' stress in being called on in a whole class setting while still giving them the opportunity to try out the new material individually. Students often monitor each other's work and give helpful, non-threatening corrections. Further, time spent in informal pairs provides a pause in learning, allowing students time to process information to long-term memory storage. Finally, by varying the seating arrangement or asking students to work with someone sitting on the left, right, in front or behind, teachers can change the membership of the informal pairs, thus insuring increased contacts and interactions between a variety of students and building student support of each other.

### IV. Creating Gouin Series

The Gouin series is useful as an alternative format to dialogues for presenting basic sentences in a language. In this format, 6-8 sentences are arranged in a logical sequential order to demonstrate

and describe how one carries out a particular activity. For example, a Gouin series could be taught in the target language on "Getting Up in the Morning":

- I wake up.
- I get up.
- I wash my face.
- I comb my hair.
- I get dressed.
- I hurry off to school.

Note that, in several foreign languages, these verbs are all reflexives so a grammatical formation is being taught in an indirect manner.

As in a Total Physical Response lesson (Asher, 1988), students act out the sentences. However, in contrast to TPR, Gouin series are organized in a logical sequence and students are usually directed to say the sentences while acting them out.

Because so much teaching of culture is typically done in English in foreign language classes, Gouin series can help meet the goal of increasing use of the target language. Instead of listening to a cultural mini-lecture in English or reading cultural notes in English, students have the opportunity to listen to and observe cultural information and then act it out while describing it. For example, a Gouin series on buying a loaf of bread would include these sentences. (Figure 2).

Before presenting the series, the teacher could set up a guide question or two to provide focus and to encourage active listening. E.g., using the target language, one could say: "After this presentation, please tell me what you say when you go into a bakery and what you say when you leave." In this way, students become active as participant observers in discovering behavior, both verbal and nonverbal, in a given cultural act.

### "À la boulangerie"

J'entre dans la boulangerie.

Je sis, "Bonjour, messieurs/ dames."

Je demande une baguette.

Je prends la baguette.

Je paie la baguette.

Je dis, "Au revoir, messieurs/ dames."

Et je sors.

(Knop, 1994, p. 35)

### At the Bakery

I enter the bakery.

I say, "Hello/Greetings, everyone."

I ask for a baguette.

I take the baguette.

I pay for the baguette.

I say, "Good-bye."

And I leave.

Figure 2

The use of Gouin series is effective for many reasons. First, in this format, the need for English is reduced: the over-all context, logical sequence, acting out of sentences, and visual aids/realia convey meaning in a concrete manner. Also Gouin series are easy to recall because several meaning reinforcers are being used and because they appeal to various senses (hearing, speaking, seeing, doing) as well as to different learning styles. Finally, Gouin series teach appropriate behavior (both verbal and physical) in a cultural activity. But, instead of being passive in a lecture or reading about cultural situations, students actively listen and watch and then say and do what is verbally and physically expected in certain cultural activities.

In line with the goal of increasing use of the target language in classroom activities, teachers could create Gouin series in the target language to replace or reinforce the English readings and cultural notes in their texts. If one's text is deficient in cultural information or if one wishes to expand the teaching of culture, the Wisconsin A Guide to Curriculum Planning in Foreign Language (Grinner, 1985) provides a useful list of cultural topics to consider for presentation through a Gouin

series, including:

1. Modes of transportation (buying tickets for and taking a train, bus, subway, plane)
2. Uses of the post office (mailing a letter, obtaining a telephone credit card, sending a package)
3. Banks and money exchanges (cashing a traveler's check, changing money)
4. Going through customs
5. Attending to physical needs (meals, shopping, obtaining a room)
6. Using telephones and other means of communication

Once a cultural area has been identified, these guidelines have been found useful for creating a Gouin series:

#### Topic:

Make sure that the cultural situation lends itself well to being visualized and acted out. Give the series a title and set up guide questions for students to consider while they watch and listen to the first presentation of the series.

#### Length:

Keep to a reasonable length in the number of sentences (6-8 sentences can usually convey the major steps in a cultural act) and in the length of the sentences. It

is usually more effective to use two simple, separate sentences rather than a compound-complex one.

### **Vocabulary:**

Include verbs that can be acted out and vocabulary that can be easily visualized. Try to use culturally authentic materials and realia and actual objects as concrete referents.

### **Sequencing:**

Act out the series as you create to make sure that the sentences follow a “logical” sequence for carrying out the situation.

### **Person:**

Keep the same person in all sentences. Decide if you want to have a command-based series with imperatives which students will learn to give to each other or a monologue of “I” sentences which students say and act out.

### **Setting Meaning:**

For each sentence, plan large, exaggerated gestures. In the presentation, consistently use the gestures along with visuals, realia and emotive quality. Insist that students also do the actions and use the visuals when they practice the sentences.

### **Teaching a Gouin Series:**

Some teachers choose to teach a Gouin series primarily for listening comprehension and discovery of cultural information. In that case, they introduce the Gouin series by creating or stating a need for the information (e.g., using the target language, the teacher says, “When you go to another country, you need to go through – point to sign – yes, customs.”) and by giving a guide question or two (“What do you need to show at customs? What must you do with your suitcase?”). Then they say and act out the series once or even twice ask the guide questions and do the series again, with students acting out and perhaps repeating the sentences once or twice. That is,

they do not expect total recall of the series but, rather, use it for having students gather information and for focusing on important actions or vocabulary in the series.

Depending on the importance of the topic and perhaps the verbs and vocabulary involved, other teachers decide to teach the series for memory, engaging the students in active practice of the sentences and actions. Appendix A lists guidelines that have been found useful by novice and experienced teachers as an aid and self-check when teaching a Gouin series in depth. Appendix B provides some samples of Gouin series.

In summary, teaching culture through the Gouin series provides an alternative activity in the target language to English lectures or readings on culture. Students have the opportunity to practice their listening and speaking skills while also developing their skills as a participant observer of linguistic interactions and physical actions in various cultural acts. As a follow-up, students may also engage in reading aloud activities or writing activities, such as re-writing a scrambled series or writing a dialogue related to the Gouin series.

## **V. Providing Authentic “Input” in Classroom Interactions**

It is the major premise of this chapter that foreign language teachers should increase use of the target language in order to provide linguistic input which then influences students’ “output” or production of the target language. However, as we increase our use of the target language, we also need to reflect on the quality of the input that we provide for students. That is, are we providing input that is varied, authentic, and appropriate?

As Richards and Lockhart (1994) note, “sometimes teachers

may develop a variety of teacher talk which would not sound natural outside of the classroom” (p. 185). For example, teachers often shorten their sentences, modify their vocabulary to rely largely on cognates, and simplify the grammatical structure of sentences. While some of this reduction in language is necessary to aid students’ comprehension, if it is overdone, the input may become inauthentic. At the very least, language input is likely to be limited and limiting for students’ output.

In the case of one of the most common teacher functions, “directing activities”, the input may even be inappropriate. Teachers often use a direct command, a register level that is not likely to gain much cooperation in the target culture. Consider, for example, the reaction of a French person if one said, “R6p6tez!” or of an English speaker if one said, “Speak louder!” Yet that register level permeates teacher talk (e.g., “Close your books.” “Take out a sheet of paper.” “Listen.”, etc.).

In order to provide more variety in classroom commands and directions, teachers might reflect on using different register levels for the same command (e.g., “Open your books.”) and draw up a list of alternatives, such as:

1. Voudriez-vous ouvrir votre livre, s’il vous plait? Would you (like to) open your books, please?
2. Pourriez-vous ouvrir votre livre, s’il vous plait? Could you open your books, please?
3. Je voudrais que vous ouvriez votre livre, s’il vous plait. I’d like you to open your books, please.
4. Ouvrez votre livre, s’il vous plait.

Simply adding “please” to commands (“Open your books, please.”) would soften them into

more of a request function and would make them more socially acceptable.

After identifying variations, some teachers have chosen to teach the alternatives through a "language ladder" as an explicit presentation to make students aware of different possibilities for giving the same command. Once students have become aware of the register level "formulas" (Would you...? Could you..., etc.), they will understand them in other contexts as well (e.g., "Would you take out a sheet of paper, please?").

Teachers might also plan to introduce variations in the forms of commands to suggest cooperation between teacher and students, such as: "Let's...(open our books/ turn to page...)" or "Now we're going to...". An additional benefit is that students will learn the forms and usage of the first person plural imperative and the immediate future tense, not as isolated grammatical items, but as contextualized structures used in authentic situations and interactions.

After introducing the alternatives for commands through a language ladder, teachers might focus on using more of them in classroom interactions. For example, one could write in a different level of command for each activity on the lesson plan for several days, consciously using varied commands each day. Making an audio or videotape of class sessions over a period of several weeks followed by a frequency count and analysis of commands used would allow one to see if change was, in fact, occurring. One could also check on students' output to see if they are beginning to use different request formulas. Such procedures are in line with the current emphasis on teacher development through action research, "teacher-initiated classroom investigation

which seeks to increase the teacher's understanding of classroom teaching and learning, and to bring about change in classroom practices." (Richards and Lockhart, p. 12)

A similar process could be used to plan for more varied and authentic language when carrying out other teacher functions, such as greetings and leave-takings, praising students' work, encouraging students' efforts or disciplining students. Again, taping of one's classes would allow for an analysis of the language we typically use. Asking students to lead classroom activities would show us what output students have acquired through our interactions with them.

In summary, if we believe that it is important to use a maximum amount of target language in classroom interactions to encourage our students' linguistic growth, then we also need to exert some quality control over the input that we are giving. By analyzing recordings of class sessions, teachers can evaluate what language samples they are providing for their students. Then they can reflect on ways to vary and expand their input, particularly when carrying out common teacher functions that recur on a daily basis in classroom interactions.

## VI. Keeping Track of Student Participation

Many students need extrinsic motivation and concrete recognition for classroom behaviors, even when those behaviors are clearly related to successful learning. For example, most foreign language teachers explain to their students why it is important to speak in the target language in class. However, some students still may not be willing to make the effort to use it during activities or in interactions. Others

are shy about talking in class, even in English and especially in the target language. Yet other students simply "tune out" during class sessions. For all these reasons, teachers often set up some sort of a system for recording participation in order to motivate students to active involvement in using the target language in the classroom. Such a system also helps teachers keep track of students' efforts to participate. A record of participation is important since in-class oral performance is considered an integral part of a student's grade in many foreign language programs.

One example of a participation system involves keeping a checklist of how many times a student speaks in the target language during the class session. Using the seating chart or a list of names, the teacher simply makes a mark next to the person's name each time he or she speaks and uses the target language appropriately and realistically. (As an alternative, students could act as "score keeper," with a different student each day assuming that role.) The record is based on a frequency-count, with recognition given for all attempts to use the language. If a response is incomprehensible, the teacher might wait to make a mark (or signal with a hand gesture to the student "score keeper") and indicate where errors are, then allowing the student to repeat and earn a point for the correction. The final tally gives the teacher an objective count of how often each student is talking in the target language during class. The tally may also serve as a reminder to the instructor to call on a greater variety of students.

At the end of the day, the teacher could summarize the points per student and then record a letter grade, determining it through a curve based on the

greatest number of points earned by a student. For example, if the highest number of points was 10 that day, students with 7-10 points might receive an A, 4-6 a B, etc. Since some class periods have more oral work than others, it is important to base the grading on what actually happened on a given day. If pair or small group work dominates the class period, some teachers monitor the groups, either assigning points or a grade for students who continually use the target language and avoid English. From time to time, an "oral participation grade" might be given out to students, based on a summary of points or grades earned for the frequency of their contributions and their use of the target language. For example, teachers may hand out oral participation grades every two to three weeks to let students know how their class work is being evaluated and to encourage them to work on daily participation and use of the target language. Students will often make a greater effort to participate if they receive frequent grades based on their classroom performance.

Clearly, no one system for keeping track of students' in-class performance is going to work in all classrooms. Teachers will develop approaches that work best for them and for their students. The age and maturity level of students is one important consideration in developing a system. For example, middle school teachers tend to use very concrete rewards, appropriate to the concept level and learning needs of transescents. When students give a correct response or an especially good one, teachers may hand out a piece of candy or copies of currency bills from the target culture which students can save and use later to purchase privileges, such as a night off from homework. At the high school level, where students wish to be

treated more like adults, some teachers allow students to keep track of their own daily participation and use of the target language, encouraging students to monitor their own work. Other high school teachers choose to award participation points only for some activities, such as those that are more demanding or more communicative.

Whatever system is put into place, its procedures need to be clearly explained to students so that they are not unfairly penalized for being unaware of how the system may affect their grade. Also, of course, the approach to gathering information on participation and use of the target language has to be fairly applied in as objective and consistent a fashion as possible. Most importantly, the system must be seen as more than a gimmick. Students need to understand that an important pedagogical principle underlies any system for evaluating their classroom participation: namely, that increased use of the target language leads to greater learning for them.

### Conclusion

The first step in increasing use of the target language in the classroom is for teachers to incorporate this principle into their teaching beliefs and to commit themselves to applying the principle in organizing and changing their teaching practices. Once a commitment is made, then teachers can draw upon the variety of classroom-tested strategies presented in this chapter for providing students with the wherewithal to understand and use more target language in daily activities.

However, increasing target language use during classroom interactions does not happen overnight. Rather, strategies need to be tried out and implemented

in a progressive manner over a period of time. Teachers can systematically introduce more classroom language through language ladders and through writing the day's lesson plan on the board in the target language. They can increase students' practice the language by organizing informal pairs and more student-to-student interactions. Use of English can be reduced and use of the target language increased by presenting cultural information in the target language through Gouin series. Also instructors can monitor their "teacher talk" and make an effort to provide authentic and appropriate input in carrying out common functions and interactions in class. Finally, we can encourage students to use more target language by recognizing and rewarding their efforts to participate in class in the target language.

In line with guidelines from state and national organizations, foreign language teachers can and should use the target language for classroom instruction and interactions. They can also provide experiences and opportunities for students to grow in their understanding and use of the target language. Through increasing use of the target language in classroom interactions, we can enable students to begin to work toward meeting their learning expectations as well as nationally stated goals of foreign language study: developing communicative abilities and proficiency in a second language.

### References

- American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. 1986. *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines*. Hastings-on-Hudson: ACTFL.
- American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. 1994. *Standards Project*. Hastings-on-Hudson: ACTFL.
- Arendt, Jermaine and Marcia Hallock. 1979.



- "Windmills and Dragons," 124-145, in Jermaine Arendt, ed., *Foreign Language Learning, Today and Tomorrow*. New York: Pergamon Press.
- Asher, James. 1988. *Learning Another Language Through Actions: The Complete Teacher's Guidebook*. Los Gatos, CA: Sky Oaks Production.
- Connor, Lucy B. 1995. "What Illinois Teachers Do in the Classroom: New Research." *Accents: Newsletter of the Illinois Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages*, 8, 2: 6-8.
- Curtain, Helena Anderson and Carol Ann Pesola. 1994. *Languages and Children - Making the Match*. 2nd Ed. White Plains, NY: Longman.
- Gaies, Stephen J. 1985. *Peer Involvement in Language Learning*. New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace and Jovanovich, Inc.
- Grittner, Frank M., ed. 1985. *A Guide to Curriculum Planning in Foreign Language*. Madison, WI: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.
- Hunter, Madeline. 1982. *Mastery Teaching*. El Segundo, CA: TIP Publications.
- Knop, Constance K. 1994. *Strengthening Foreign Language Instruction*. Bellevue, WA: Bureau of Education and Research.
- Research.
- Krashen, Stephen. 1985. *The Input Hypothesis*. White Plains, NY: Longman.
- Met, Myriam and Nancy Rhodes. 1990. "Elementary School Foreign Language Instruction: Priorities for the 1990's." *Foreign Language Annals*, 23, S: 433-443.
- Nerenz, Anne G. and Constance K. Knop. 1982. "The Effect of Group Size on Students' Opportunity to Learn in the Second- Language Classroom," 47-60, in Alan Garfinkel, ed., *ESL and the Foreign Language Teacher*. Lincolnwood, IL: National Textbook Co.
- Richards, Jack C. and Charles Lockhart. 1994. *Reflective Teaching in Second Language Classrooms*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rivers, Wilga. 1988. *Teaching French: A Practical Guide*. Lincolnwood, IL: National Textbook Co.
- Snyder, Barbara. 1994. *Strengthening Your Foreign Language Program: Using Interactive, Student-Centered Activities to Increase Effective Communication*. Bellevue, WA: Bureau of Education and Research.

*Ed.Note:* The article is being printed with permission of Marusia Peryshyn, Director, Ukrainian Language Education Centre, Canadian Institute for Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta.

**Constance K. Knop** is professor emerita of the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She was Professor of Curriculum and Instruction and of French and Italian. Professor Knop's many publications includes articles in leading professional journals. She is the recipient of numerous professional awards including the Florence Steiner Award for "Leadership in Foreign Language Education", and the Anthony Papalia Award from ACTFL for "Excellence in Foreign Language Education."

**Mosaic**

## Student Exchanges

Provide an opportunity to learn first hand about Canada and its rich cultural diversity

## Educational Travel

Open students' minds to adventure...  
tour a Canadian city and offer a  
new dimension to learning

It's easy and affordable. Contact us  
today to plan your educational travel,  
your exchange or both!



Exchange  
...Explore  
...Experience!

Charitable Registration #10797 1341 RR



1 800 38.SEVEC [www.sevec.ca](http://www.sevec.ca)

*Philip M. Donley*

## Suggestions for Language Teachers Who Have Students With Visual Impairments

*Students with visual disabilities pose special problems for the instructor. The Author offers some concrete suggestions for students with visual disabilities.*

It is not unusual for us as language teachers to have students with disabilities in our classrooms. In most instances, the disabilities pose few special challenges for the instructor. This is not the case for instructors who have students with visual impairments. However, my research indicates that there is scant information in our field about teaching blind students or students with impaired vision. These suggestions listed below, gleaned from informal visits with instructors and students, are intended to help fill that lacuna. It is important to note, however, that the suggestions are not prescriptive—every educational situation is different, and teachers should always rely on their best judgment and common sense when facing any instructional challenge.

1. *ask your student about his or her needs.*

Be sure to ask your visually impaired student about his or her abilities and limitations... our student is your best resource for information about his or her educational needs.

2. *Contact the office on your campus that deals with students who have special needs.*

The specialists in that office may have several ideas for accommodations that can be made for your student, as well as resources that can be put at

your and your student's disposal.

3. *Be sensitive to the physical accommodations your student may need.*

Your classroom should be accessible to a person with visual impairments and free of any objects that might be obstacles to his or her mobility. Also, if your student uses a trained guide dog, the dog should be allowed in your classroom. However, you should remind your students not to pet or touch the dog, as this may interfere with its training or distract it from its responsibilities.

4. *Include the visually impaired student in your daily classroom activities.*

To foster self esteem and help your student be a fully participating member of the classroom community, be sure to include him or her in your classroom activities. You should feel free to call on the student and include him or her in skits, pair or group activities, presentations, etc.

5. *Make use of whatever visual capacity your student may have.*

Your student may be able to discern shapes, motion, colors, light and dark, etc. Ask your student to tell you what he or she can see. Then, when you prepare lesson plans, use this

information to help you create activities that include your student.

6. *Capitalize on your student's other senses.*

Consider the ways that you can enhance your student's learning experience by taking advantage of his or her sense of hearing. It is important that your student be able to hear you and the other members of the class; allow the student to sit in the place that best allows him or her to do so. Encourage your student to ask questions if he or she doesn't understand what you're talking about, and consider allowing him or her to tape-record class sessions for later reference. Also, think about creating "verbal pictures" that will help your student follow along while you speak to the class or write information on the chalkboard. For example, when you write on the chalkboard, be sure to describe what you're writing. And when you speak to your class, be as descriptive and specific as possible (e.g., if you are describing photographs to the class, you may want to do so in a very vivid way; talking about what the people and objects in the picture look like and how they are positioned relative to each other).

Whenever possible, take advantage of your student's sense of touch, taste, and smell. You may, for example, ask him or her to describe and identify objects after touching and manipulating them. On occasion, you may be able to involve the student's sense of taste and smell (e.g., by bringing examples of foods to your classroom).

7. *Investigate print materials prepared especially for the blind or visually impaired.*

You may be able to enhance

your student's learning experience by obtaining large-print language materials or materials in Braille.

8. *Take advantage of existing and developing technologies.*

You may want to have someone tape record key parts of your textbook so that your visually impaired student can have access to them at home. Also, you may want to look into audiotapes or audio CDs that your student could use to reinforce his or her learning. Finally, investigate developing technologies such as scanners that can analyze web pages and/or print materials and convert them to audio form.

9. *Arrange for your student to have "learning partners" and educational support outside class.*

Your student may benefit from

having learning partners, who may be classmates, university staff members, or volunteers from your community. Learning partners can assist the student in several ways, such as providing transportation, helping the student navigate classroom buildings, and taking class notes and going over them with the student. You may also want to arrange for tutors to work with your student outside class time.

10. *Consider special accommodations for assignments and assessment situations.*

You may want to be flexible when giving assignments and assessing your student's progress. For example, if your student can read, but with difficulty, you may want to allow extra time for completing assignments or tests. If your

student has very limited vision, it may be preferable for your student to complete assignments and tests by dictating his or her answers to a learning partner who writes them down. Other options to consider include assessing your student's progress through a series of oral interviews and allowing your student to audiotape or videotape his or her assignments.

**Philip M. Donley Ph.D.**, has taught Spanish at the University of Texas at Austin, Southwestern University, and Austin Community College. His interests include language anxiety and teaching critical thinking skills. He often conducts seminars in anxiety-reduction and critical thinking.

## A message for the Editor: The "new" Mosaic...

After a gap of three years, **Mosaic** will resume its publication. We had decided to put it to rest, but... numerous phone calls and e-mails suggested and encouraged us to resume its publication.

We are currently negotiating with some institutions to create "partnerships" to ensure the continued publication of the journal and to making it even better for the classroom teacher. Not only will we continue to publish theoretical and practical articles for the language instructor, but we will also be publishing full-page "camera-ready" activities giving our readers permission to reproduce them for their own language classes.

The next issue, Volume 9, No. 1 (Spring 2007), will contain the following articles:

- **Unity on Diversity: Promoting Mutual Understanding Through Languages**

by Serafina Lina Filice

Filice discusses the importance of encouraging language and cultural diversity as a means of overcoming communication barriers within and beyond the European Community.

- **Multiple Intelligences and Language Teaching: Another Look at "Broken Paths"**

by Paolo Torresan

Torresan reviews Gardner's theory as it has given rise to a series of experiments and second-language practice.

- **"Dear Santa..." Santa Claus Helps with Communicative Competence**

by Carmela Colella and Anne Urbancic

Colella and Urbancic suggest a successful activity which includes students at both the elementary and university levels.

The issue concludes with full-

page camera-ready reproducible activities, *Jouons avec les mots* and *Juguemos con las palabras* by Anthony Mollica.

Other articles which have been accepted for publication include.

- **Individual Differences In L2 Learning and the Good Language Learner**

by Christine Besnard

- **Developing a Multilingual Language Learning in a Powerful Environment: A Case Study**

by Barbara Spinelli and Roberto Dolci

- **Increasing the Students' Basic Vocabulary in French, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish through English Cognates**

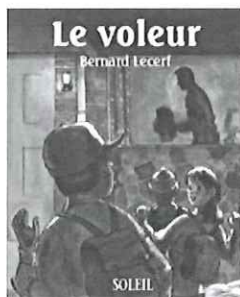
by Anthony Mollica

- **French and Spanish camera-ready reproducible activities**

We thank you for your past support and hope that you will continue to be among our regular readers.

Anthony Mollica

*Ensoleillez votre salle de classe avec nos publications!*



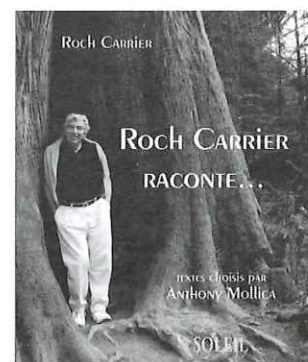
BK-120  
Texte



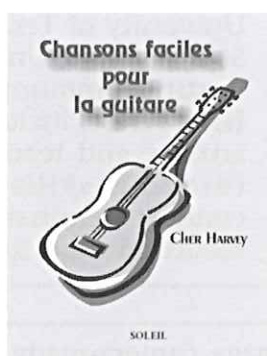
BK-121  
Activités



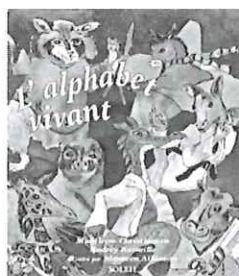
BK-173  
Texte et Activités



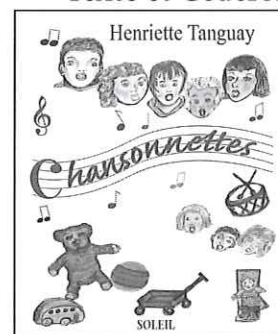
BK-229  
Texte et Cédérom



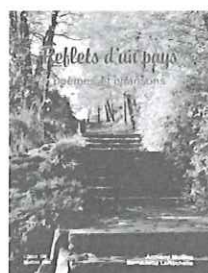
BK-172



BK-171  
Texte et Cédérom

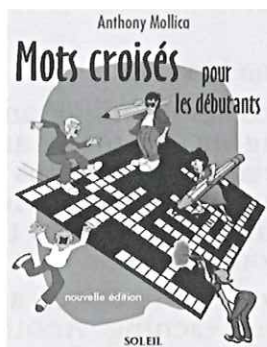


BK-200



BK-024

*Reflets d'un pays* • Poèmes



BK-201  
Photocopiable



BK-097  
Photocopiable



BK-067  
Photocopiable



BK-072  
Photocopiable



BK-195  
Photocopiable