

LOTE CED *Lowdown*

August 2001

www.sedl.org/loteced

Volume 4.4

Languages Other Than English Center for Educator Development

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Learning Languages Other Than English: A Texas Adventure



After nine months of production, the LOTE CED, TEA's T-STAR Studios, and TEA's Languages Other Than English unit has finished work on the original video series *Learning Languages Other Than English: A Texas Adventure*. Initially aired on the T-STAR network as a 5-part series during the spring 2001 semester, the video collection in its entirety is now available.

The series is comprised of five, 30-minute episodes. Video One provides an overview of current thoughts on LOTE teaching and learning in Texas. The potential audience for this video is broad: it provides an introduction to state standards to new LOTE teachers, and it serves as an advocacy piece that can be shown to parents, administrators, and community members to promote foreign language study. The remaining four videos concentrate on the five Program Goals (Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities – the five “Cs”) upon which the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Languages Other Than English (TEKS for LOTE) are based. Each of the four contains one identical segment, about seven minutes in length, that briefly defines the five Program Goals and elaborates on the three communication modes (interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational). The remainder of each of these episodes is dedicated to illustrating and expanding upon its given program goal: Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, or Communities. Thus, each episode can be used independently, yet still contain the important message that Communication is at the heart of learning a language.

The “stars” of the video hail from all over the state of Texas and include LOTE students, teachers, and coordinators, district administrators, parents, and other community members. Among those school districts with featured classrooms are: Alamo Heights ISD (San Antonio), Dallas ISD, Eanes ISD (Austin), Fort Worth ISD, Garland ISD, Houston ISD, Irving ISD, Katy ISD, North East ISD (San Antonio), Northside ISD (San Antonio), Pasadena ISD, and Richardson ISD.

Copies of the video series are available for a fee through the Regional Education Service Centers (ESCs). The ESCs download and record T-STAR programming when it is broadcast. Therefore, to get copies, you will need to contact the T-STAR representative at your ESC. You can find a list of these representatives at <http://www.t-star.org/regions.html>.

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Contemporary Communication Skills: Viewing & Showing

The TEKS for LOTE state, "Acquiring another language incorporates communication skills such as listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing, and showing." Viewing and showing are important and somewhat new and challenging concepts in language teaching and learning. The skills are recognized by Texas policy not only in the subject area of LOTE, but in English language arts as well. (The TEKS for English Language Arts use the term "representing" instead of showing.) The national English language arts standards also embrace the skills of viewing and showing. In fact, those national standards link skills with their medium: reading and writing use written language, listening and speaking use spoken communication, and viewing and showing involve visual language:

Being literate in contemporary society means being active, critical, and creative users not only of print and spoken languages but also of visual language of film and television, commercial and political advertising, photography, and more. Teaching students how to interpret and create visual texts such as illustrations, charts, graphs, electronic displays, photographs, film, and video is another essential component of the English language arts curricula. Visual communication is part of the fabric of contemporary life. ... We must therefore challenge students to analyze critically the texts that they view and to integrate their visual knowledge with their knowledge of other forms of language. By studying how visual texts work, students learn to employ visual media as another powerful means of communication. (National Council of Teachers of English, 1996)

So what do viewing and showing mean in the context of the LOTE classroom?

Viewing means **understanding and interpreting non-linguistic communication**: noticing gestures; seeing a presentation of a play (not just reading it); observing cultural practices and manifestations (e.g., recognizing that the French do not leave curtains and window shutters open at night); looking at cultural products, such as works of art; and gaining visual information in addition to linguistic information from advertisements, television programs, etc. Interpretation is the communication mode used primarily for viewing.

Showing means appropriately **using non-linguistic elements**: practicing culturally authentic gestures, demonstrating cultural

practices (e.g., dances), using graphics and illustrations with presentations, and role-playing. Presentation is the communication mode used primarily for showing.

Although the terms may be new in the LOTE student standards, viewing and showing have long been used as tools in the language classroom. It's almost second nature for language teachers and learners to rely on visual cues from videos, fine arts, texts, etc. They facilitate comprehension of language that is beyond one's current proficiency level. For example, students may not understand every word in a print ad, but they can make inferences about the ad's message by interpreting its images. Similarly, *showing* comes in handy when trying to deliver a message for which one may not have all the needed structures and vocabulary. For example, students may use pantomime or gestures in a role-play or skit. The next step, and the challenge of the standards, is transforming *viewing* and *showing* from learning tools into powerful communication skills.

National Council of Teachers of English. (1996). *Standards for the English Language Arts*. Urbana, IL: Author.

STATE TEXTBOOK ADOPTIONS: IT'S SOONER THAN YOU THINK!

Recent actions taken by the Texas State Board of Education have altered in some ways how textbooks will be adopted in subject areas and the time cycle scheduled for adoption. In short, rather than staggered adoptions for LOTE materials as in the past (e.g., German and Spanish one year, and French and Latin the next), all levels of all languages will now be adopted in the same year. This will hold true for each subject area in the curriculum, i.e., all mathematics materials will be adopted in the same year, all English Language Arts the same year, etc. For LOTE, the State Board has moved the time schedule for adoption up two years, to 2004, rather than 2006, as originally planned. This means that the call for LOTE materials will go out in 2002 (Proclamation 2002), adoption of materials by the State Board of Education will occur in November 2004, and in early 2005, school districts will choose for themselves the instructional materials they will use beginning in August, 2005. The reason for moving the schedule up for LOTE and other enrichment subject areas was to bring all materials in line with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills. LOTE materials and other enrichment area materials are currently aligned specifically to the former state curriculum, the "Essential Elements."

Facilitator Spotlight

Close to one hundred Texas LOTE educators have been trained by the LOTE CED as TEKS for LOTE and/or Peer Coaching and Mentoring training facilitators. They serve as consultants to provide in-service through Independent School Districts and Regional Education Service Centers.

GREG FOULDS

Greg has taught Spanish for nine years, including levels I, II, II PreAP, and III. He currently teaches at Winston Churchill High School in San Antonio. In December of this year, he will receive his Masters of Education in School Administration from Southwest Texas State University. Greg is an avid trainer. For the LOTE CED, he serves as both a Peer Coaching and Mentoring and a TEKS for LOTE facilitator, and he co-facilitated the center's second training of trainers for the Peer Coaching and Mentoring Program. In addition, he has conducted assessment workshops for his colleagues in North East ISD and has presented at numerous LOTE conferences, including ACTFL, TFLA, and TECCL. Greg's classroom is featured in the "Communities" episode of the T-STAR video series, *Learning Languages Other Than English: A Texas Adventure*. (See front page.)



LEAH SEQUEIRA



Leah Sequeira has taught French in the Houston area for seven years, including levels I through V-AP. She is a professional growth enthusiast, having recently attended seminars on Teen Leadership and Accelerated Learning where she embraced and has implemented the notions that students should be accountable for their behavior and responsible for their own

learning. Leah believes in being both teacher and classroom facilitator, encouraging affirmation, team support, respect, honesty, and 100% effort from her students. Outside of the classroom, she serves as both a Peer Coaching and Mentoring and a TEKS for LOTE facilitator and co-facilitated the center's second training of trainers for the Peer Coaching and Mentoring Program. Leah loves her work and is a true "lifelong learner."

Upcoming Conferences

Texas Foreign Language Association (TFLA)

October 25–27 • Houston, TX
www.baylor.edu/~TFLA

Texas Classical Association

November 2–3 • Austin, TX
www.txclassics.org

Sixth Annual Dual Language Conference

November 7–9 • Albuquerque, NM
www.dpcs.aps.edu/cosecha/index.htm

National Association of District Supervisors of Foreign Languages (NADSFL)

Nov 14–15 • Washington, DC
Email: swatts@ops.org

American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL)

November 15–18 • Washington, DC
www.actfl.org

American Association of Teachers of German American Association of Teachers of Italian Chinese Language Teachers Association National Council of Japanese Language Teachers

November 15–18 • Washington, DC
(In conjunction with ACTFL)

Modern Language Association (MLA)

Dec 27–30 • New Orleans, LA
www.mla.org

American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages and American Council of Teachers of Russian (AATSEEL & ACTR)

December 27–30 • New Orleans, LA
clover.slavic.pitt.edu/~aatseel

Southwest Conference on Language Teaching (SWCOLT)

March 7–9 • Oklahoma City, OK
www.learnalanguage.org/swcolt

National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE)

March 19–23 • Philadelphia, PA
www.nabe.org

Texas Foreign Language Association (TFLA)

April 5–6 • Midland, TX
www.baylor.edu/~TFLA

Check out **What's Hot** on the LOTE CED Web site for a regularly updated list of conferences and other activities.

<http://www.sedl.org/loteced/hot.html>

Resources



New for LCTL Teachers: The Virtual Picture Album

(excerpted from the CARLA electronic newsletter, the *CARLA Update*, and the CARLA web site)

Language teachers know how useful drawings and photographs can be as teaching tools. However, while there are innumerable advantages to the use of pictures, it can be difficult and time-consuming to find a variety of pictures that are appropriate to build lessons around. This is particularly true for the Less Commonly Taught Language (LCTL) teacher, who often has to work in isolation with limited resources, and therefore has no one with whom to share the effort and expense of such a task. One of the goals of the LCTL Project at the Center for Advanced Language Acquisition Research (CARLA) is to encourage the teaching and learning of LCTLs by making resources available on the Internet; the project thus hit upon the idea of creating an extended online photo album or scrapbook that they call the "Virtual Picture Album" (VPA).

The VPA is a computer archive of digitized photographs and drawings accompanied by useful descriptions and suggestions for ways to incorporate these pictures into various in-class and out-of-class activities. There is even a small collection of sample exercises using pictures from the VPA that can be used as is or modified for one's own purposes. All of the items in the VPA can be accessed from a web site and can be downloaded free of charge for educational purposes.

The VPA currently offers royalty-free pictures from China, India, Israel, Ireland, Japan, Norway, Poland, and Tunisia. A VPA for the Basque countries and Portuguese was also recently completed. More pictures will be added soon for China, Egypt, and Thailand. You can visit the VPA at: <http://carla.acad.umn.edu/VPA/VPA.html>.

African Language Teaching Resources

Journal of African Language Teaching & Learning

The National African Language Resource Center (NALRC) at the University of Wisconsin recently published the first volume of a new refereed journal about the learning and teaching of African Languages. The *Journal of African Language Teaching and Learning* (JALLT) includes articles, research studies, editorial, reports, book reviews, and professional news and announcements relevant to African languages. Among the articles featured in the journal's first volume are:

- *Content-Based Instruction for African Languages*
- *The Communicative Orientation of First-Year African Language Textbooks*
- *Easy Development of Multi-Media Language Teaching Materials Using Quicktime Pro*

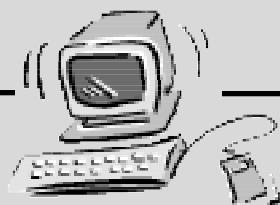
Swahili Learners' Reference Grammar

Also recently published by the NALRC is the first in a series of African language reference grammars, *Swahili Learners' Reference Grammar*. The book is written for speakers of English who are learning Swahili; it explains the basic terminology and concepts of English grammar that are necessary for understanding the grammar of Swahili. The volume is intended to supplement the classroom text. Similar volumes for Yorùbá and Pulaar are in the works.

For more information on either of these publications, please contact the NALRC by phone, (608) 265-7905 or e-mail, nalrc@mhub.facstaff.wisc.edu.

African Language Tutorial Guide & Video

The Center for Language Education and Research (CLEAR) at the University of Michigan offers the African Language Tutorial Guide and video. The two products lend support to teachers/tutors of African languages. It is especially helpful to native speakers of African languages who are teaching language for the first time. The lessons in the manual are geared to meet the needs of students who are studying in order to visit or live in an African country. However, all African language learners can benefit from the lessons since language as well as cultural issues are targeted. The lessons in each unit emphasize communicative and task-based activities. Contact CLEAR to receive a copy. (E-mail clear@msu.edu or telephone 517-432-0473.)



About Japan

www.csuohio.edu/history/japan/

This web site provides students, teachers, and other interested visitors easy access to a multitude of Internet resources related to Japanese civilization and culture. Sites have been selected to provoke and encourage interest in a wide variety of traditional and contemporary themes. In addition to the alphabetically indexed topic pages, the author includes a visual literacy exercise designed to highlight ways to approach non-text materials and links to the accompanying series of illustrated lectures on the cultural history of Japan.

Fukushima International Association

www.worldvillage.org/e_index.html

FIA was founded to foster strong relationships between citizens of Fukushima, their visitors, and the global community. Locally, they provide information centers and a foreign resident support system. Additionally, they promote personal development through language and culture classes, network building, and sponsorship of international activities. The web site, available in both Japanese and English, includes a guide for living in the prefecture and specific information about its major cities. There is also an online archive of their bi-monthly newsletter, GYRO, which is published in both languages as well. These resources all provide an authentic look into what it's like to live and work in Japan.

BOKUNAN-DO

www.shop-japan.co.jp/english-boku/index.3html.htm

This site markets kimonos, stage and festival costumes, martial arts accessories, party goods, gift items, greeting cards, and decorative household articles. Available in both English and Japanese, the site includes pictures of every item and prices in yen. A currency converter and complete ordering information are provided. The site is maintained by the Borgnan International Cultural Information Center of Japan, which among other things, publishes educational materials for Japanese learners of English.

PROFESSIONAL JOURNALS AND YOU: HISPANIA

Hispania is devoted to the teaching of Spanish and Portuguese and is the official journal of the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese (AATSP). Each issue contains articles on pedagogy, literature, linguistics, and technology-assisted language instruction. In addition to the print version of the journal, the first issue of *Hispania* to be digitalized by the Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes, Vol. 78.1 (1995) is now available on line at www.cervantesvirtual.com/hemeroteca/hispania. For those interested in back issues of *Hispania*, the AATSP sponsored a five-year project that produced *Hispania Articles on CD-ROM*. With this software, teachers can browse through more than 4,500 articles that have appeared in *Hispania* since its first issue in 1917. The CD-ROM includes full text-search capability. Two other CD-ROM editions are also available. *Hispania for Elementary School Teachers* contains "articles on teaching Spanish and Portuguese in elementary schools including a large number of articles on FLES with practical suggestions for the classroom, articles reflecting teacher experiences, and articles about culture, curriculum, and grammar at the elementary school level." Although articles on pedagogy and methodology might be "dated," *Hispania for High School Teachers* also contains supplementary curriculum material such as survey articles in English (e.g., "Gaucho Poetry of Argentina"), many with excerpts of prose and poetry, and short articles in Spanish, like "Rubén Darío." For more information, go to: <http://www.ippi.com/hispania.html> or write IBUKI, *Hispania Articles on CD-ROM*, 340 Second Street, PO Box 1627, Los Altos, CA 94022. Examples of articles and information appearing in recent issues of *Hispania* include the following:

- May 2001 MEDIA/COMPUTERS: Review of a Website: Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra (For AP teachers)
- March 2001 PEDAGOGY: Secondary Schools IDEA: An Interdisciplinary Unit Comparing Don Quixote to Hamlet (For teachers of Level V and above)
- September 2000 NATIONAL SPANISH EXAMINATIONS: 2000 National Winners (For teachers whose students participate in the exam and others who might be interested in doing so)
- March 2000 OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS: The Robert G. Mead, Jr. Travel and Study Scholarship Award (For all high school Spanish teachers)

A CLASS ACT: Preview of Great TEKSpectations

For some time now, the LOTE CED has been advocating the use of learning scenarios as an excellent means of implementing the TEKS for LOTE in the classroom. Learning scenarios describe sets of standards and task-based activities that are related by a common theme. Ideally, they are student-centered, stimulate creativity and divergent thinking, use authentic and contextualized language, and consider a variety of learning styles and preferences. In the interest of promoting the concept and use of learning scenarios, the LOTE CED will be publishing a volume of approximately 30 scenarios written by Texas teachers of Arabic, French, German, Japanese, Latin, and Spanish. Below is a preview of this publication, *Great TEKSpectations*, in the form of a scenario entitled “Mi Reflejo.” (For more information on the publication itself, see the Bulletin Board on page 10.)

Mi reflejo SPANISH

Lynn Basdeo, Plano ISD
Renée Wooten, Wichita Falls ISD

La Casa en Mango Street by Sandra Cisneros is a collection of short narratives written as reflections of the protagonist, Esperanza. In these stories, Esperanza recounts tales of her family, friends, and neighborhood and examines the lasting influence they have on her life. Cisneros’s novella is used as a catalyst for the creation of an autobiographical booklet, the students’ final product in a unit on self-awareness. (Activities can be adapted to other works of literature—essays, poems—such as those that deal with the topic of self-esteem and self-awareness.) In this scenario, students create a *librito autobiográfico* to reflect their uniqueness as well as to connect to the Spanish-speaking world. Students explore personal values and make cultural comparisons in a unit designed to enhance self-esteem and self-awareness through a variety of activities. Students describe themselves and significant others in order to demonstrate how they fit into their own community. Each of the following activity sets leads to a product, i.e., a page that students can include in their *librito autobiográfico*.

Activity Set 1: Mi nombre (My Name)

In the introduction to the novella and one of the stories, “Mi Nombre,” Esperanza describes the meaning and feelings associated with her name. Either in small groups or working independently, students read “Mi Nombre”. After reading the selection, students work in small groups and use a graphic organizer such as a Venn diagram to reflect on the importance of one’s name. Then students create a bio-poem (See Fernández in *Resources*.) related to their name and which includes current structures and vocabulary items. This poem is illustrated, and the poems are displayed around the room prior to inclusion in the final product. Students are given the opportunity to share their poems in small groups or with the entire class.

Activity Set 2: El vecindario de mi niñez (My Childhood Neighborhood)

All the selections in the novella are about Esperanza’s childhood community. After reading a few selections from it, students reflect upon their own childhood community and create a “picture” of their neighborhood by writing a paragraph describing the area and noting the names of streets, buildings of interest, friends and neighbors who populated it, etc. Students also compare their childhood community with the one described in the novella. Some students enjoy drawing an illustration or computer design captioned in Spanish to accompany the description.

Activity Set 3: La mano mía - mi familia (My Hand - My Family)

Since the main character in Cisneros’s novella explores how she fits into her family and community, students mirror this reflection by performing the

PROFICIENCY LEVEL

Intermediate

TARGETED STANDARDS

Communication: Interpersonal,
Interpretive, Presentational

Cultures: Practices & Perspectives

Connections: Access to Information

Comparisons: Concept of Culture

Communities: Within & Beyond the
School, Personal Enrichment &
Career Development

MATERIALS

- *La Casa En Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros
- Art supplies, cameras, photographs
- Computer access for students who wish to develop their projects in that way

following tasks. Students create original sentences describing several members of their families. Then students trace their hand on a piece of paper. In the palm area, students write their name and then record a descriptive statement about their family members in each of the five digits of the hand-tracing. This is an excellent opportunity to practice peer editing in groups of two to four students. (Students may opt out of this activity if they prefer not to write about their family.)

Activity Set 4: Mis amigos (My Friends)

In several of the stories from Cisneros's work, Esperanza describes her friends from the neighborhood. After reading or listening to some of the descriptions, students create scrapbook pages that include photographs and written descriptions of their friends in Spanish, elaborating on their personality traits. The pages can be displayed in the classroom, or students can choose to "introduce" a friend to the class. More advanced students can add information about the importance of the friendship in their life, tell a funny or touching story about the friend, or make a comparison of a friend with that of a fictional character from Cisneros's novella.

Activity Set 5: El árbol de la vida (Tree of Life)*

In Cisneros's novella, Esperanza describes herself in several of her tales including "Bella y cruel" and "Caderas". The following activity provides students a unique way to describe themselves. They need a blank sheet of paper and several crayons, markers, or colored pencils. They have five minutes to draw a tree of their choice; the teacher plays some music from a Spanish-speaking country as students work. At the end of this time, they list seven adjectives (in Spanish) that describe the tree. Finally, students use the adjectives written around the tree to describe to a partner, group, or the class how the tree is representative of their own personality.

*This activity was shared by Toni Theisen at the LOTE CED Learning Scenarios Development Workshop, Austin, Texas, April 2001.

Activity Set 6: Mi autoretrato (Self-Portrait)

In this activity, students produce a self-portrait page using a photograph from home or one taken in class. They first write a description in Spanish of their physical characteristics and personality traits. Next the written descriptions are collected and displayed for all to see. As a whole-class activity, students try to match the descriptions with the photos which are also displayed. Finally, students attach their photograph to their description to complete their self-portrait.

Activity Set 7: Mis preferencias (My Favorites)

An "opinion line-up" is used to begin exploring the students' personal preferences. Place pre-written phrases around the room such as *me encanta*, *me gusta*, *me gusta un poco*, *no me gusta*, *no me agrada nada* or similar statements of opinion. Call out a word (an activity, a food item, a person, etc.) and ask students to place themselves in front of the phrase that best expresses their opinion of it. Each student has a turn at calling out a word to which the others respond. Once students have reflected on their personal preferences, they begin to collect visual images and words in Spanish related to activities, objects, and ideas that express their likes and dislikes and which they use in creating a collage. Finally, they share the preferences depicted in the collage in small groups or with the whole class. Students may also do an analysis of the class's preferences based on the information gathered in the line-up or in the collages.

EXPANSION IDEAS

Differentiation of instruction and assessment is implemented by allowing students to have choices as to which pages are generated for the final product. They may choose to "opt out" of certain activities, or they may wish to include additional pages that meet their personal expectations, ideas for which are included below.

- Students interview family, friends, and classmates about preferences and then find a unique way (song, drawing, poem, etc.) to compare their answers.
- Students develop a chart to compare themselves with a fictional Spanish-speaking character or historical figure.
- *Versos Sencillos* is an excellent text to reinforce the imperfect tense with emphasis on what students used to do, what they were like, and what family life was like in their early childhood.
- As a culminating activity, advanced-level students write a letter in Spanish to themselves in which they describe their feelings about the process of completing the *librito autobiográfico*. Students reflect on the insights gained from self-exploration and address goals and aspirations as an outgrowth of the project.
- Provide tactile or artistic learners the opportunity to construct a model of a neighborhood with a house representing the childhood home of each student in the class. The model becomes a springboard for multiple conversational activities.
- Students create a display of their *libritos* for other teachers and students to appreciate.

Activity Set 8: Show and Tell

Students bring an item of personal significance to share with the class. The sharing is in Spanish and reflects why the object is representative of, or important to, the speaker. A photograph or a drawing of the item shared and a short, original poem in Spanish about its significance to the student is included as a page in the *librito autobiográfico*.

Activity Set 9: Yo soy (I am)

Students choose a piece of art, literature, or song from a Spanish-speaking country that reflects something about their personality to use as a springboard for further self-expression. For example, a student could read *Versos sencillos* by José Martí (which begins, "Yo soy un hombre sincero") and then create an original "Yo soy" poem to describe themselves. (See Fernández in *Resources* for examples.) Other students might choose different vehicles for self expression: creating their own sculpture or painting reminiscent of an original, adapting a Spanish-language song to reflect their personality, etc. Copies of the students' work become a class publication entitled, *La Clase en ____ Street*.

Reflections On How Targeted Standards Are Met

Communication: Students use the interpersonal mode to participate in group discussion and exchange information. The interpretive mode is used when students read authentic texts and the presentational mode when they show and tell about their products.

Cultures: The novella provides students with the opportunity to understand and appreciate Cisneros's perspective and portrayal of a Spanish-speaking family's life experience.

Connections: Students use authentic texts to gain access to information. They connect to Reading Language Arts through the study of Spanish-language literature.

Comparisons: Students examine family and friend relationships, discover and evaluate shared interests and opinions, and seek to understand how they are truly unique and have value in our common society. They compare personal cultural norms, values, and perceptions with that of an Hispanic culture.

RESOURCES

Carrera-Hanley, T. et al (1998). *Ventanas Uno*. Geneva, IL: McDougal Littell.

(*Ventanas Dos* and *Ventanas Tres* are also good. These readers include selections at three proficiency levels related to the scenario's topic, e.g.: "Nombres y apellidos hispanos," "Querida amiga," "¿Eres perfeccionista?," "Versos sencillos," "Balada de la estrella," "El árbol de oro," and "La siesta del martes.")

Cisneros, S. (1994). *La Casa En Mango Street*. New York: Random House, Inc.

Fernández, C. (1998). *Creative Writing Prompts in Spanish and English*. Auburn Hills, MI: Teacher's Discovery.

Santiago, E. (1993). *Cuando Era Puertorriqueña*. New York: Random House, Inc. (Advanced-level text)

Webliography

www.espanole.org

Reflections on the Creative Process in LOTE Teaching & Learning

By Sarah Thompson



As a second year teacher of ninth grade Spanish in Midland in 1990, I remember thinking that my students would be much more interested in learning our new vocabulary words if I took a box of those items to class for them to “play with.” The truth is, I myself was bored to death with the idea of just “talking” them through another memorization exercise. With a box of *realia*, (in this case, several simple items from around the house in various states of disrepair), I became excited about the possibilities of teaching the new words. From the box of manipulatives grew a simple scenario, the courage to try a new approach I’d heard of (TPR), and *Voilà!* From my own boredom grew a series of creative activities that lifted my students right off the vocabulary sheet and into real life. It lifted me up, too.

How do we manage to seek creativity consistently in our teaching, especially if we’re returning to the same textbook or thematic units, the same classroom, the same levels of instruction for the umpteenth year? I believe that a fresh approach, a new teaching method, an unusual context—anything that can rejuvenate, inspire, and arouse our love of the content—is something we owe not just to our students, but also to ourselves.

In a day when teachers do well to fulfill the innumerable responsibilities of their jobs, many otherwise wonderful professionals feel it’s all they can do just to teach what they know in the same way they have always taught it. Let’s challenge ourselves to feed *ourselves* along the journey of another school year with something daring and different, something that stirs our passion and reminds us of our reasons for wanting to teach that language in the first place.

I have been blessed in my career by the guidance and influence of supervisors who introduced me to many such “appetizing” opportunities to grow my capacities as a teacher. With the help of a respected colleague or maybe the reassurance that comes with collaborating on something for the first time together, we can find the creative energy to lift our teaching—and our students—to higher levels of success. Whether our interest lies in learning scenarios, multiple intelligences, virtual travel, storytelling, WebQuests, peer coaching, videoconferencing, or some other aspect of language instruction, let’s delve in and take the plunge!

Whatever it costs us in time and energy will be returned to us ten-fold in the form of motivation, a sense of accomplishment, heightened interest and, above all, our students’ success!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sarah Thompson".

Sarah is an elementary Spanish teacher for the Distance Learning Program in Richardson ISD. She was recently named as one of five Elementary School Teachers of the Year in her district and is an author in the upcoming LOTE CED volume of learning scenarios, *Great TEKSpectations*.

LOTE CED Bulletin Board



Fall TFLA Conference

The annual fall conference of the Texas Foreign Language Association (TFLA) will take place from October 25-28 in Houston at the Adam's Mark Hotel. For more information, visit the conference web site at www.fac.swt.edu/bond/tfla/conference.html or contact Nathan Bond via e-mail, jb50@swt.edu or telephone, (512) 245-3098.

Stay Tuned!

In late August, the LOTE CED will complete work on and publish a collection of TEKS for LOTE-based learning scenarios entitled *Great TEKSpectations*.

Español Para El Hispanohablante

(available August 2001)

The second edition of the TEA publication *Español para el hispanohablante* will be published in August 2001. This publication addresses issues of interest to those involved in the teaching of Spanish for Spanish Speakers (SSS) courses, including the implementation of the TEKS for LOTE in these courses. A copy of *Español para el hispanohablante* will be mailed to all secondary campuses in Texas in late August.

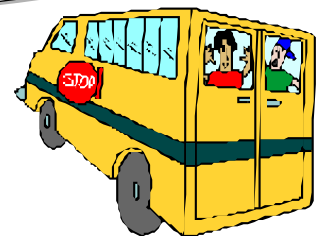
"Intercultural Competence" *Communiqué* out in early August

Check your mailboxes for the latest volume of the LOTE CED's occasional paper series, the *Communiqué*. This paper, entitled "IC? I See! Developing Learners' Intercultural Competence" was written by our own Elaine Phillips. It recognizes the importance of the products, practices, and perspectives standard, but discusses the development of students' intercultural competence (IC) beyond this model. The paper suggests that teachers of LOTE help their students to "have new eyes" in their study of culture, and that they devote explicit attention to the development of self-awareness with regards to the students' own culture(s) as well as positive attitudes towards the culture(s) about which they are learning. Be sure and check out the "For Reflection" section at the end of this *Communiqué* – it will surely provide you and your colleagues great food for thought.

SPANISH TEACHER LINDA BARRS RECOGNIZED

LINDA BARRS, DEPARTMENT CHAIRPERSON AND TEACHER OF SPANISH AT A&M CONSOLIDATED HIGH SCHOOL IN COLLEGE STATION, WAS RECENTLY NAMED A&M CONSOLIDATED TEACHER OF THE YEAR 2000, COLLEGE STATION ISD SECONDARY TEACHER OF THE YEAR 2000, AND EDUCATION SERVICE CENTER, REGION VI SECONDARY TEACHER OF THE YEAR 2000-2001.

ii CONGRATULATIONS, LINDA !!



SO LONG, FAREWELL, AUF WIEDERSEHEN, GOOD-BYE...



Six years ago I moved to Austin from Virginia, knowing only one or two people and knowing not where I would live, work, or play. I was ready for a change and took a chance that things would work out once I arrived in Texas. I was exceedingly fortunate – within weeks I had an apartment, gainful employment with a program called Project ExCELL at SEDL, and nice colleagues who turned out to be great friends. My good fortune has done nothing but grow since that time. Through Project ExCELL, I met countless terrific people and educators and gained excellent professional experience in a field I love. When Project ExCELL transitioned into the LOTE CED in 1998, I was offered the great chance to “take the reins” of a project whose work I find to be of critical importance and value to the language learners of Texas. The work has allowed me to travel all over Texas, and I have really enjoyed meeting the people and experiencing the unique subcultures of this vast state. Best of all, I’ve had the privilege of working with a team of people I respect professionally and adore personally. Over time, I also made friends outside of work, cultivated a social life, resettled my best friend from home to here, and met and fell in love with the amazing man I married last year.

So why am I leaving?

My husband and I are preparing for the next big change in our lives: settling down and raising a family. For us, this means two things: (1) getting some “wanderlust” out of our systems, and (2) choosing a place to live that is closer to family. We’ll be working on the first of these for the next several months; we’ll keep you posted on number 2! (Here’s hoping my good fortune continues...)

The outstanding news for all of you involved in LOTE education in Texas is that the accomplished and talented Elaine Phillips will be taking over as Director of the LOTE CED. With her at the helm, you can expect the center’s fifth year to be nothing less than brilliant.

Best wishes for a great school year – I will miss being a part of it.

Lillian King Meidlinger



LOTE CED Field Specialist Elaine Phillips, (Outgoing) Director Lillian King Meidlinger, and Information Assistant Chuck Reese

LOTE CED Approaches its Fifth Year

The LOTE CED will begin its fifth year of work in September. Here are some of the undertakings on the horizon for Year Five:

- Redesign and expansion of the LOTE CED web site.
- Development of a comprehensive, searchable catalog of web-based resources for teachers of LOTE.
- Creation of an on-line database of TEKS for LOTE-based learning scenarios for a variety of languages.
- Development of a teacher handbook to accompany the video series *Learning Languages Other Than English: A Texas Adventure*.
- Completion of TEKS for LOTE Module IV, which addresses the needs of Spanish for Spanish Speakers.
- Continued distribution of the *LOTE CED Lowdown*.
- Continued distribution of the LOTE CED’s occasional paper series, the *Communiqué*.
- Videoconference training sessions via TETN for orientation to new web resources, Module IV, etc.

ENCORE LEARNING SCENARIOS DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP

The response to the first LOTE CED Learning Scenarios Writing Workshop (see LOTE CED Lowdown Volume 4.3) was so positive that a second writing workshop was held in Austin on June 4-5. Nine teachers of LOTE took part in the “encore” workshop. Representatives from seven different school districts came to Austin; included among them were teachers of Arabic, Japanese, French, and Spanish. The work produced by the writers will be published in a volume of TEKS for LOTE-based learning scenarios, *Great TEKSpectations*, to appear in late August 2001.

The purpose of the workshop was to provide the participants some food for thought and time to write. After a review of the state standards and an interactive presentation on Multiple Intelligences theory, the teachers worked in pairs to create original and imaginative learning scenarios (theme-, task-, and standards-based instructional units).

We'd like to thank our second group of learning scenario writers and recognize them below:

**Chizuko Bolinger, Houston ISD
Ginger Cline, Irving ISD
Dorothy Cox, Fort Bend ISD
Aurora Hansis, Northside ISD
Ricci Hatten, Eanes ISD**

**Helen Nakamoto, Katy ISD
Fadwa Saqer, Houston ISD
Leah Sequeira, Spring Branch ISD
Teresa Tattersall, Northside ISD**

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