

The Professional Journal of the National Network for Early Language Learning

LEARNING LANGUAGES

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whole child



whole world

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**Multimodal instruction
in pre-kindergarten:
An introduction to
an inclusive early language program**



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A Global Mindset for Every Child

I don't believe that raising global children is an option. Since my daughters were born, my husband and I agreed that we would open the world to them. We're both globally-minded people and feel compelled to share our knowledge of the world as well as our desire to learn more about the world in an effort to understand it, explore it and enjoy it. We believe instilling global awareness in children is one of the critical elements of a well-rounded education and intellect and that is just as important as excellent nutrition and physical fitness, spiritual fulfillment, and emotional strength and stability.

What do I mean by raising global children? As a parent and a professional who spends a lot of time with college students and their future employers, I believe that global mindedness is not just a career skill, but a life skill. I believe it is a set of abilities growing in importance and has just as much to do with innovation and problem-solving abilities as it does with an ability to appreciate different cultures. A global mindset matters in the communities where we live just as much as in our workplace, as global mobility increasingly means that wherever we live, we will likely share our schools, communities, neighborhoods, clubs and places of worship with people from ever-more diverse backgrounds. But we have our work cut out for us as a nation. According to the National Research Council, Americans' "pervasive lack of knowledge about foreign cultures and foreign languages threatens the security of the United States as well as its ability to compete in the global

Stacie Nevadomski Berdan is a seasoned global executive and an expert on international careers. She is the author of six books on the intersection of globalization and careers, including the best-selling *A Parent Guide to Study Abroad* (IEE 2015) and award-winning *Raising Global Children* (ACTFL 2013).



marketplace and produce an informed citizenry" ("Executive Summary" 1).

I believe we need to raise Americans capable of living and working effectively in a global economy. But what does that capability require? Dr. Mansour Javidan at the Thunderbird School of Global Management has conducted rigorous scientific study on the drivers of expatriate success with the results published in *Conceptualizing and Measuring Global Mindset®: Development of the Global Mindset Inventory*. Javidan and his team identified the following traits:

Intellectual capital: Knowledge of global industry and competitors and is measured by global business savvy, cognitive complexity, cosmopolitan outlook.

Social capital: The ability to build trusting relationships, including intercultural empathy, interpersonal impact, and diplomacy.

Psychological capital: Passion for diversity, quest for adventure, and self-assurance.

Interestingly, they concluded that although both intellectual and social capital could be taught, they have not been able to determine if adults can be taught psychological capital. Curious to know what other successful adults with a global mindset think about the topic, I conducted quantitative and qualitative research with hundreds of people who have self-identified as having a global mindset. One of the survey questions relates to the key factors in developing a global mindset. In order of importance, respondents said that open-mindedness (84%), interest in other cultures (70.9%), ability and willingness to listen to others (67.3%), curiosity (62.5%) and flexibility (61.1%) are the most important components of having a global mindset. These are traits that can be taught early on in a child's life.

A question I have asked of global thinkers throughout my research over the past 10 years is to tell me how they developed their own global awareness. Almost every single person has related a story to me about

a specific point in time or experience that they look back on as "the" moment that shifted their thinking and, therefore, the path they would take as a globally-minded adult. Almost all of these occurred between the ages of eight and twelve, and the vast majority mention an adult, most often a teacher, who inspired them -- not with an earth-shattering experience, but a small touch that enabled them to want to explore the world.

All of us can inspire global thinking in children because global mindedness is all about the mindset; it's an awareness of one's self and one's culture in relation to the rest

Parent's Corner

of the world. It's a way of looking at our one world through many different lenses and seeing new things, different things and being ok with that. It's also about being curious about those differences, curious enough to seek out why and possibly even connecting to share or learn more. It is my hope that every child has an adult helping them develop a global mindset to better prepare them to thrive in the world and, ultimately, to make the world a better place. One child, one world.

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- "Executive Summary." National Research Council. *International Education and Foreign Languages: Keys to Securing America's Future*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2007. doi:10.17226/11841.
- Javidan, Mansour, Leatta Hough, and Amanda Bullough. *Conceptualizing and Measuring Global Mindset: Development of the Global Mindset Inventory*. Glendale, AZ: Thunderbird School of Global Management, 2013. Web.

This year, the NNELL Summer Institute explored art integration, authentic language use in real world settings, interculturality, and building the whole child block by block through ACTFL's World-Readiness Standards. Authentic language use demonstrates knowledge of content areas and is a cumulative demonstration of standards and intercultural understanding. Therefore, when feeling challenged to find balance in our lessons, let's not forget that real life application should reflect the whole child.

Globalization not only affects how we interact with each other, it also affects how we interact with the environment. Off the coast of popular tourist destination Cancún, Mexico, you will find an art meets science exhibit created to preserve and protect the delicate marine life around the coral reefs. Sculptures are sunk into the marine floor providing an alternative diving site to lure people away from and reduce damage to the fragile environments surrounding coral reefs. The collaboration of artists and marine biologists to tackle an issue created by human interaction with the environment is a great representation of how harmonious solutions can come about when we look holistically at a situation. The solution of using art to offset the traffic to the fragile environment of the coral reefs while contributing to the economy and inevitable human interaction encompasses art, science, math, social sciences, languages and more.

This issue is titled Whole World, Whole Child and may only scratch the surface of issues related to education of the whole child. Second Life: Creating Worlds of Wonder for Language Learners by Dr.

Ocasio disrupts the physical limitations of travel by providing a portal into other areas of the world while appealing to the interests of tech savvy middle schoolers. Our Parent representative, Stacie Nevadomski Berdan, discusses beginning at home and changing the mindset of parents and their approach to educating the whole child to include self-awareness and one's culture in relation to the rest of the world.

Saint Paul & Hendley make early language learning a priority in their article, The "Fun with Languages" Project: Making learning another language an early priority. By facilitating a positive experience early while learning a language, both the parents and the child will be inspired to continue on a path to learning another language.

Too often, for students with special needs, learning a language is avoided. In their article, Multimodal Instruction in Pre-kindergarten: An introduction to an inclusive early language program, Regalla, M. & Peker, H. demonstrate not only evidence of success with introducing languages in an inclusive classroom, but a positive experience as well.

On behalf of NNELL, we hope you will join us in a regional workshop, at an annual NNELL Summer Institute, or at our annual National Networking Breakfast at the ACTFL Convention.

President's Message



Nadine Jacobsen-McLean
NNELL President



SECOND LIFE

Creating Worlds of Wonder for Language Learners

By Michelle A. Ocasio, Ph.D.

INTRODUCTION

Second Life is one of many three-dimensional virtual environments in which you create an avatar for the purpose of socializing, learning, developing skills and exploring a variety of academic and social areas. It is not a social media forum that posts status updates; rather, it is a space for people to gather in real-time using technology. Since its inception in 2003, Second Life has been used by educators to build and foster innovative learning environments and simulate real-life experiences. This virtual world has also been the subject of intense scrutiny since many view it as a decadent den of mischief and danger. The following is based on my own experiences with Second Life in my Spanish and Linguistics courses at Valdosta State University, as well as on my personal use of Second Life for meeting with teachers, professionals, and students from around the world. It is my hope that this article will assuage any fears about virtual worlds and invite more educators and students to be a part of this exceptional and wonderful learning community in their early language learning endeavors, especially for students ages 13-15.

By creating a free account at www.SecondLife.com, an individual also creates an avatar to represent him or herself in the virtual world. This avatar can be customized to have a similar physical appearance to its user, or it can be a robot, a tree, a gargoyle, a Boston Terrier, a fairy princess, a superhero, or any object – human or otherwise – of one’s choosing. Younger learners, in particular those in middle school, will be fascinated by the opportunity to come alive on the screen as a walking, talking and flying character from their imagination with the ability to interact with others in real time. Despite its noticeable game-like façade, Second Life is not a

video game. Upon entering Second Life, you should have an objective in mind; otherwise, it is like walking aimlessly into an everyday park. Do you wish to practice a foreign language? Would you like to take a peek into Paris as it was in the 1920s? Are you interested in modern art or have a fondness for indie music? Of course, Second Life welcomes anyone who wishes to enter and explore all there is to see and do.

In an effort to enhance the interactivity in my online courses, I have been using Second Life with my Spanish and Teaching English as a Second Language (TESOL) students for over five years. I was

introduced to Second Life during my second semester as an Assistant Professor during a conference on online teaching and technology. As I was an avid video gamer, I was curious about how virtual worlds could be useful in teaching, especially where everything (from buildings and vehicles to people and gardens) had to be designed and constructed by its users. Creating spaces for any use (educational or recreational) in Second Life is not intuitive; thus, I attended online training

workshops throughout the semester following the conference. At the time, I did not yet know how I wanted to use Second Life in the classroom, only that I was keen to use this extraordinary and wonderful technology in some fashion. Teachers of younger learners are encouraged to create an avatar and jump right in, because in this case, you must learn by doing, rather than by reading about it. By doing an inworld search of “G-rated” areas and educational Sims, there are numerous fascinating places to be discovered! What to do in these newly found locations is only limited by one’s imagination.

HOW NOT TO APPROACH LEARNING IN SECOND LIFE

I am always enthusiastic to inform others on how Second Life can be used in the classroom, but its use comes with a few caveats.

Second Life

www.secondlife.com

Second Life Destination Guide

<http://secondlife.com/destinations>

Second Life Education/Resources

https://wiki.secondlife.com/wiki/Second_Life_Education/Resources

Smithsonian Latino Virtual Museum

<http://latino.si.edu/LVM>

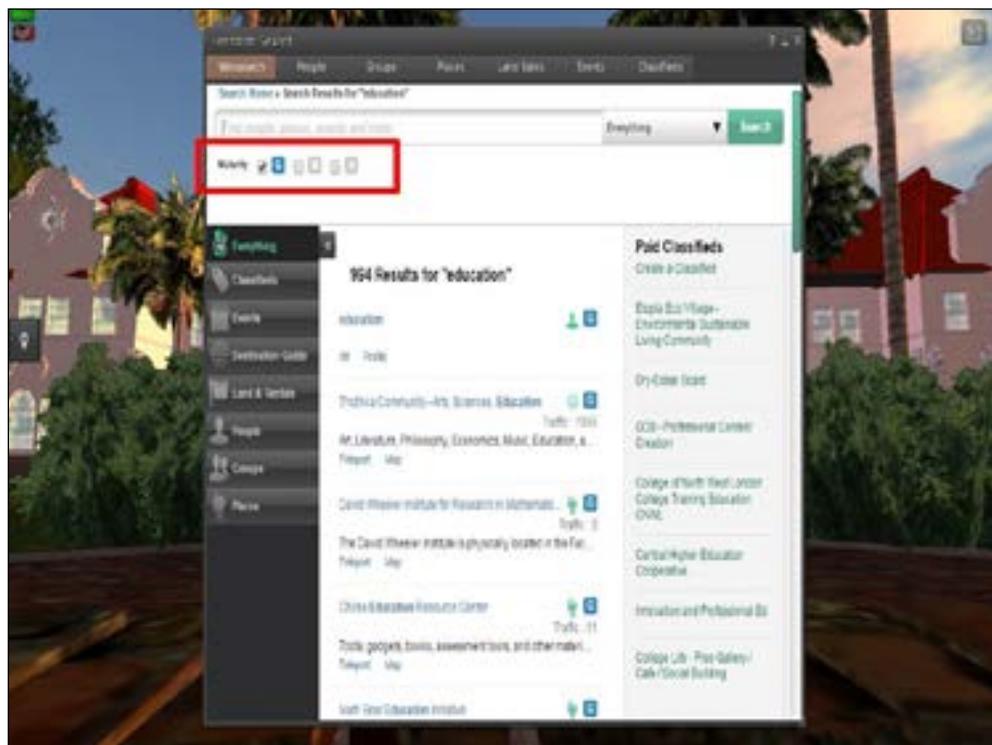
Teacher Tool Kit (for Smithsonian Latino Virtual Museum)

<http://latino.si.edu/LVM/TeacherToolKit?slide=0>



Often, teachers have the idea that Second Life is equipped with places and people already available to engage in role-play or to guide with learning skills. They ask about the possibility of arranging field trips to Mars to study geology, visiting a café in Paris to practice ordering a meal in French, or even simulating a frog dissection. While these ideas would surely bring an air of excitement to any classroom, some details are important when considering ways to make effective use of Second Life. First, Second Life is made up of areas (called “sims”) that are hand-made by people just like you and me. That Mars is a location in real life does not mean that it exists in Second Life; it is a location that must be built by someone who has enough fascination with Mars to painstakingly recreate it, at his or her own expense, for use by the public for free. Although it is free to use Second Life, renting a space and acquiring the materials in which to customize it comes with a nominal fee. Some of the most interesting and detailed sites are sponsored by universities or institutions that hire professional builders to recreate their vision. For example, Texas A&M and Florida State University have collaborated to create a space in which to teach virtual chemistry, Nova Southeastern University of Florida has created a location for virtual health adventures, and “Live and Learn,” a German-based non-profit organization, has recreated a virtual African village to help raise money for poverty-stricken children in Nairobi.

Another important challenge is that while Second Life is ideal for role-playing simulations such as recreating the customs counter at an airport or practicing a language with native speakers, one must provide the characters for both sides of the conversation. For example, if an instructor would like to have students practice speaking Arabic to check into a hotel (greetings, spelling one’s name, asking for locations, and so on), then the instructor must provide not only the hotel and the décor (inside and outside of the hotel) that identifies it as a hotel in an Arabic-speaking country, but an Arabic-speaking hotel staff must also be provided by the instructor. Luckily, there is a vast number of existing locations in which to design a simulation; one only needs to check the Destination Guide on the Second Life website to find categorized lists of different locales, or more specifically, review the Second Life Education/Resources page for universities and museums. Creators of a location are not required to provide avatars



to engage in your project but collaborations are almost always welcome. Locating an area’s designer and sending a message to inquire about academic partnerships is as easy as looking at someone’s profile.

Finally, and most importantly, effective use of Second Life in the classroom takes some creative thinking and exploration on the part of the instructor. Instructors eager to use virtual worlds with their students might initially use Second Life for activities that can easily be accomplished in the

classroom. There are dozens of amphitheatres, classrooms and conference rooms in various locations in Second Life, and asking face-to-face students to meet in one of these spaces for a lecture and slide presentation with audio on Cuban music would not have many advantages over performing the same activity in the classroom. Apart from the “coolness effect” that students may feel upon entering this virtual environment, it is, after all, still a simple lecture with music samples. Today, language learning now

focuses more on second language use in real life contexts more so than second language learning in classroom environments (Wang and Vásquez 416), but care must be taken with the actual use of realia. Nonetheless, by visiting the Smithsonian Latino Virtual Museum, one can listen to Cuban music, learn about Afro-Cuban musicians by viewing a video, and see photos of their instruments. For other activities, students can visit the Day of the Dead cemeteries, take a guided tour of ceramics in the museum and play on the Ball Court of the Sun against other classmates while learning how it was played by ancient Mesoamericans. The Smithsonian LVM website provides a Teacher Tool Kit for instructors to design a lesson plan based on this location. The cemetery, which has tombstones of famous Hispanic musicians, is clickable and leads to websites that celebrate their life and talent. Nearby, there is another cemetery in which students learn about and build their own Day of the Dead altar with gifts and food.

PRIVATE CONFERENCES IN SECOND LIFE

Creating office space in Second Life offers a safe, private and convenient way for instructors to convene with other instructors, parents and students. One of the advantages of having one's own space in Second Life is to maintain control over the immediate environment. For example, if you build (or purchase) a quaint garden cottage to use as your virtual office, you can manage the area so that only one person (or more, at your choosing) may enter at a time. Furthermore, by creating private groups to which your students belong, the virtual office can be configured to allow only members of that group to enter. These settings are not only for structures but for entire areas as well. If you set your area so that no one outside a group may enter, then a person who walks (or flies) up to your perimeter would be met with an invisible wall. Private voice or chat conversations are possible to regulate privacy, and if the chat feature is used, you can configure the settings to keep a written log of all conversations. Screen sharing is also useful, provided it is a website that is not fully protected (such as a university LMS, student records or any site containing student information). Through the use of media screens that one can purchase or build, the instructor and student can listen to and view "regular" websites, watch videos linked from YouTube, or display PowerPoint presentations. For example, you can design an area with permanent slideshow viewers displaying student work that only parents

have permissions to view. These settings can be essential for use with younger learners as they allow them to share work in a safe manner. This section can be open from 5pm to 8pm on a Thursday evening, for example, for parents to pop in, view their child's work and chat with teachers and run into other parents. Another area can be constructed to show photos from the latest field trip. Mailboxes can be configured such that if a student arrives at an area and has questions, he or she can click on the mailbox, type a message into the chat box, and the message can be delivered directly to your personal email. An entire department could have a row of mailboxes with their photos, so that students and parents may send mail and make inquiries directly to the school teachers and administrators. The possibilities for instructors and schools to increase and maintain focused communication with parents and guardians regarding a student's language learning progress have very few boundaries.

CHALLENGES WITH USING SECOND LIFE AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Linden Labs, the creator of Second Life, recommends that users be at least 18 years old. Sexual and violent content does exist in Second Life and in the past, Linden Labs created a special "Second Life Teen" area just for young people. This area was removed in 2010 to allow everyone access to the main Second Life grid. Nevertheless, there are safeguards in place to prevent young people, 13 to 17 years old, from viewing and purchasing adult content.

At ages 13 to 15, one may create an account only through an affiliated organization (such as a school) and thus is restricted to the "G-rated" area created by the organization. The organization is responsible for configuring the settings so that the area remains private, prohibiting the entrance of anyone over 15 years of age. The "G" rating in any given area means that all content (spoken or displayed) must be free of any and all sexual or violent content. At ages 16 to 17, an individual may have a "regular" account to visit other locations, however, he or she is still restricted to those areas in Second Life that have the "G" rating. Thus, it is important for educators who would like to use Second Life to carefully review all district and school policies for implementation and maintain open channels of communication with members of the administration and parents to ensure clarity regarding how safety measures are being addressed. Some districts may require

specific forms for parental consent as well as an in-depth explanation of how learners and content will be protected while maintaining access to the benefits of Second Life.

SUMMARY

Used wisely, Second Life is an exciting and innovative way for young people to experience learning and development in a variety of academic fields. Instructors can create their own space to be used for parent-teacher or distance conferences and students enjoy the social context of seeing their classmates in a virtual world. Language learning is taken to exciting heights as students visit user-created replicas of real-world locations. Whether discussing the content of a classic foreign-language book or simulating a medical emergency, Second Life offers a unique method to engage in the target language that cannot be achieved in the classroom. Language learners are immersed in the location, walking through gardens, hospital hallways or down ancient, dusty roads, experiencing the sights and sounds as if they were there. Second Life offers enhanced interactivity and adds dynamism to learning provided that the technology is used skillfully and with an objective in mind, rather than using virtual worlds simply because they exist. Teachers need not be skilled technicians to use Second Life in the classroom; small steps can be taken over time as collaborations are formed with existing Second Life enthusiasts and new ideas materialize. It just takes a few interested people to get together and create a whole new world and a new learning approach for students.

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Michelle A. Ocasio is an Assistant Professor of Spanish and TESOL at Valdosta State University, as well as the campus director for Second Life. Although Dr. Ocasio's primary research interests are historical linguistics and contact languages, she has been involved in Second Life since 2012 and is always eager to collaborate in Second Life with foreign language professionals from all over the world. Feel free to come and visit by executing a search for "Valdosta State University" in Second Life.



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MULTIMODAL INSTRUCTION IN PRE-KINDERGARTEN:

An introduction to an inclusive early language program

By Michele Regalla and Hilal Peker

INTRODUCTION

During the 2013-2014 school year, a charter school in Central Florida (which will be given the pseudonym “The Unity School”) known for its practice of full inclusion launched an unconventional project. The Unity School, which serves children from preschool through grade five, began offering foreign language to all pre-kindergarten students. The Unity School’s practice of offering its French program is uncommon for a couple of reasons. First, few foreign language programs exist for young children in the U.S., with only about 25% of U.S. schools offering any type of foreign language program at the elementary level, according to Pufahl and Rhodes (2011). This trend of offering foreign language only at the secondary level continues despite research conducted decades ago by Lambert and Tucker (1972) showing the benefits of early language learning on first language literacy skills. More recently, studies conducted by Bialystok (2001) have shown that foreign language learning is beneficial to a student’s overall cognitive skills; specifically in problem solving.

Furthermore, students of all ages who

have special needs often do not have the opportunity to enjoy the benefits that learning a foreign language can provide. Students with special needs may be discouraged from pursuing foreign language study for various reasons, including the belief that learning a second language is a privilege reserved for typically developing students only. The authors of this article, a university professor and a graduate assistant, played a major role in the development and implementation of The Unity School’s French program. The purpose of this article is to describe a pre-kindergarten foreign language program designed to make learning French accessible to all children.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research in the field of foreign language education for students with special needs has often focused on the challenges that arise for students and their teachers. The challenges with foreign language study noted in the literature regarding students with special needs include weaknesses in language processing skills, especially in phonology according to Leons, Herbert, and Gobbo (2009). This weakness results in a struggle with the decoding of written texts and the pronunciation of words. Tanock and Martinussen (2001) also asserted

that students who have difficulties with verbal working memory, typically those who have attention deficit hyperactivity disorders (AD/HD), find it hard to simultaneously work on remembering vocabulary, using syntactical rules and applying the right grammar while listening to teacher or watching a video in another language.

The aforementioned studies of special needs students have been conducted in high school or university foreign language classes where literacy skills are a large part of the curriculum. In this setting, special needs students have shown evidence of struggle with literacy-based components of language learning resulting in the practice of exemption for special needs students at all levels of foreign language study. Many well-meaning teachers, administrators, and parents feel that foreign language learning can be too challenging for special needs students and that exemption is in the student’s best interest. However, the mission of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) is to ensure free public education to all students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment. A restriction of special needs students from foreign language classes does not align with the mission of IDEA

(2004). Furthermore, studies have shown that special needs students can participate successfully in foreign language classes when inclusive teaching methods and multimodal approaches are used (Regalla and Peker 631; Sparks 18).

SETTING AND PREPARATION OF THE FRENCH PROGRAM

SCHOOL SETTING

The Unity School is a charter school serving children from pre-kindergarten through grade 5 which practices full inclusion of children with special needs. The Unity School is unique in that it maintains a balance of approximately 50% special needs students and 50% typically developing students. Because The Unity School has a long-standing partnership with a local university, the principal of the school welcomed the opportunity to begin a foreign language program for all students by inviting university professors to the school. In the Fall of 2013, a meeting took place between the school principal and two university professors, one of whom is an author of this article. We decided that French instruction would begin at the pre-kindergarten level in all three classrooms.

We met with all three pre-kindergarten classroom teachers to explain the benefits of early language learning and the structure of the proposed French program. Each pre-kindergarten class was scheduled to receive one thirty-minute French lesson two days per week taught by a French teacher from the university. In addition to the two French classes per week taught by the French teachers, the French materials were left with the pre-kindergarten classroom teachers to be used throughout the week in order to expose students to French on a daily basis. We also provided parent permission forms in accordance with the university's Institutional Review Board. The letter explained the French classes and all related research projects. Parents had the option of removing their child from French classes and from any university research studies, but none of the parents chose to do so.

TEACHERS

During the semester prior to the start of the French classes, one of the university professors, who is also a certified French teacher with prior elementary language teaching experience, designed the curriculum, ordered materials, and recruited French teachers. The teachers for the program included the university professor and two university French majors who are not in the field of education. Because the French

majors lacked a teaching background, we provided a two-hour professional development session for the French majors prior to the start of the program. The professional development session focused on lesson planning, implementing engaging activities such as Total Physical Response (TPR), and classroom management. The professor wrote the weekly lesson plans and arranged the schedule so that the French majors were able to observe the professor teaching the French lesson to her assigned pre-kindergarten class just before teaching their own classes. We observed the French majors teaching their lessons and provided them with feedback on their teaching throughout the semester.

MATERIALS AND PROGRAM DESIGN

Due to the fact that the school site follows a full inclusion model, we made an effort to create a foreign language program where all students could participate fully and experience success by incorporating a multimodal approach to language teaching. Multimodal teaching techniques can include technological resources such as the use of visuals, graphics, animation, and video, according to Moreno & Mayer (2007). Special needs students often require more time to process linguistic input and need repetition to incorporate new knowledge into both short and long-term memory. Due to the need for repetition, Skinner and Smith (2011) recommend multimodal teaching techniques when creating language lessons for students with learning disabilities because of the multiple types of exposure to language that multimodal techniques provide.

In order to provide multimodal instruction appropriate for young learners of all ability levels, we chose the *Little Pim* video series (2015). *Little Pim* was created to teach foreign language to young children from birth through age 6. The video series features a cartoon panda who presents vocabulary and short phrases in French by making use of visuals and other scenarios in order to provide a context for language learning without the use of translation. Each week's lessons focused on a theme connected to one episode of the *Little Pim* video program. The French instruction in the pre-kindergarten classes included the videos from the *Little Pim* series, videos and songs found from other online sources, teacher-directed instruction, and teacher-created activities that are age appropriate for pre-kindergarten students.

THE FRENCH LESSONS

After a semester of preparation, the French classes began in January 2014. A typical French class session started with a warm-up activity, such as an exchange of greetings between the teacher and students. Next, the French teacher reviewed previous learning by asking students to identify words pictured on flashcards or realia brought in by the teacher. After reviewing key vocabulary and phrases, the French teacher played the *Little Pim* video episode corresponding to the theme and vocabulary. During the video episode, the teacher encouraged children to repeat the vocabulary and respond to prompts provided in the video. Following the video, the teacher led the children in songs, teacher-designed games, or a TPR activity that reinforced the vocabulary and the phrases presented in the video. Each lesson ended with a short review activity designed by the teacher to summarize learning.

To illustrate an example of typical activities conducted by the French teachers, we will share short transcripts of lesson activities. The theme of the following transcripts is the food and table setting vocabulary from the *Little Pim* DVD entitled *Eating and Drinking*. Transcripts will show examples of a typical vocabulary review, interaction during a viewing of a *Little Pim* episode, a TPR activity, and a song.

VOCABULARY REVIEW

First is an example of a teacher-led vocabulary review that would normally last for approximately five minutes. In the following example, the teacher used realia





such as plastic food and silverware that she brought to the classroom. The teacher removed each item from her bag, called on individual students to identify the vocabulary in French, and then she asked the class to repeat the word chorally.

T: "Qu'est-ce que c'est?" [What is this?]

S: Une banane [a banana]

T: "Très bien, Emily. Répétez classe, une banane." [Very good, Emily. Repeat class, banana]

SS: "une banane" [banana]

VIDEO EPISODE

The next transcript comes from the end of an episode of *Little Pim*. Pim has presented several vocabulary words and phrases on the topic of food and drink. At the end of the episode, a visual is shown and students are prompted by Pim to identify

the vocabulary with a question and a pause, giving students an opportunity to provide the French word.

V: "Qu'est-ce que c'est?" [What is this?]

SS: Une pomme [an apple]

Total Physical Response (TPR)

During the instruction of food and table setting vocabulary, the French teacher announced that the students were to prepare a picnic for Little Pim. She set a small blanket on the floor in front of a stuffed Pim panda toy seated in front of the classroom and distributed realia such as plastic silverware, paper plates, cups and plastic foods to all of the students. As each item was announced by the teacher, students who were holding those items brought them to the picnic blanket at the front of the class. For example, when the teacher asked, "Qui

a la pomme?" [Who has the apple?], and "Qui a la fourchette?" [Who has the fork?], the student with the plastic apple and plastic fork came to the front of the room and placed those items on the picnic blanket.

SONGS

One of the songs played during the *Eating and Drinking* unit was about lunchtime. The song includes food and drink vocabulary learned in the unit, but also includes words for some non-food items. The singer asks children if they want to eat a series of items for lunch. Some of the items suggested were typical lunch foods, while others are undesirable. Students were asked to respond to this song by agreeing or disagreeing in French as to whether or not they would eat the suggested items:

Song lyrics: "Qu'est-ce que vous voulez

pour déjeuner? Un gâteau au poisson et l'arraignée?" [What do you want for lunch? A cake made of fish and spiders?]

SS: *Non!* [No!]

Song lyrics: *D'accord, du lait, des pâtes, et des fruits?* [Ok, milk, pasta, and fruit?]

SS: *Oui!* [Yes!]

During the French lessons, the French teacher-led instruction with the support of the pre-kindergarten classroom teachers. Classroom teachers supported the French lessons in various ways. First, they were present during the French lessons, helped to keep students on task, and assisted with behavior management. This was especially important for the French teachers who did not have any background in education or classroom management. The classroom teachers also modeled examples of engagement in the lessons by repeating French vocabulary words with the class and participating in the French teacher-directed activities. In addition to participation in the French lessons, classroom teachers played the video episodes and prompted their students to use their French vocabulary during the week when French was not in session.

ASSESSING STUDENT OUTCOMES AND THE FRENCH PROGRAM

The authors of this article collected data on student learning in the form of video recordings of French classes. Out of the 32 French classes that were observed and video recorded, 11 videos were selected for data analysis. The authors and another university professor reviewed each video separately and recorded evidence of learning using a student list coded for special needs status. The reviewers counted the number of instances when students displayed evidence of demonstrating their understanding of French or the ability to communicate in French by correctly responding to teacher prompts (see Regalla and Peker 2015 for full details of the study). We found video evidence showing that all students were able to understand simple French based upon their nonverbal responses, as in the example of the picnic TPR activity. Also, evidence showed that all students were able to engage in verbal communication with their teacher in French exchanges, such as the vocabulary review activity. In some cases, students with special needs required additional prompting from their French teacher or the pre-kindergarten classroom teachers in order to use their French language skills. These additional prompts and longer wait time were used by the French teachers most frequently as

instructional modifications for special needs students. However, video evidence also showed examples of special needs students participating in French lessons along with their typically developing peers without any additional prompting or wait time. Overall, the video evidence demonstrated that students of all ability levels can participate in foreign language classes and enjoy a positive language learning experience.

At the end of the school year in May 2014, the pre-kindergarten classroom teachers were asked to complete a questionnaire to assess the French program. All three classroom teachers reported that the French classes had a positive impact on their students, the students looked forward to their French classes, and they requested that the French program continue. Also, the classroom teachers reported positive feedback from parents of participating students who were impressed that their children were using their French vocabulary at home. One teacher stated that several parents of participants asked for a French vocabulary list so that they could review with their children at home.

Conclusion

Although a small French program such as the one conducted at The Unity School cannot make an argument for changing the practice of exemption of special needs students from foreign language classes, this study makes a contribution to our knowledge in this area. This French program provides an example of a school's commitment to full inclusion and shows that all children can participate in foreign language learning regardless of ability level. Due to the success of the French program in the pilot year, The Unity School has continued with the pre-kindergarten French program for a third consecutive year with hopes to expand the program into other grades and continue to provide access to foreign language learning for all students.

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THE 'FUN WITH LANGUAGES' PROJECT: *Making learning another language an early priority*

By *Thérèse Saint-Paul, Ph.D.*
and *Valérie Hendley*

There is no denying the importance of multilingualism in the 21st century; increased travels, student exchanges, global business, diplomacy, and security are mediated by communication. Education is the key to building a strong multilingual world community that will work for peace and stability. However, it may be often overlooked that a successful educational system is measured in part by the investment that governments place in early education ("Equality and Education" OECD report 2012). The first part of this paper reviews the essential benefits of early foreign language exposure and learning for the development of the whole child. It also looks at the historical changes of Foreign Language in the Elementary School (FLES) in the United States, along with some comparisons to European trends. In the second part, the article describes a FLES initiative at the K-12 level, launched three years ago in partnership with Murray State University

in Kentucky that aims to kindle a love of and interest for foreign languages at an early age and whose cutting-edge approach aligns itself with some of the recent studies and trends mentioned below.

PART 1

"Make learning a second language a top priority as early as possible" is one of the ten tips that Nevadomski Berdan recommends for raising global children (2015). Research has identified why an early start to learning languages is seen as beneficial, and under what conditions (Nikolov and Mihaljevi Djigunovi 2011). One essential condition is described by the Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH)—as defined in cognitive science and neurobiology—establishing the early years as the time during which learning a foreign language is optimized (Nikolov and Mihaljevic Djigunovic 2006). Research in brain development also correlates density in the Inferior Parietal Lobe with how early the individual began his or her language acquisition and how fluent a person is in a second language (Tindell 2015). Brain

research has further corroborated what educators have found: instruction for beginning language learners, in particular, should take into account their need for context-rich, meaningful environments. For instance, Genesee stated that individual difference in learning styles exists in the structure of the brain and is thus beyond individual control, hence the importance of engaging all senses and skills (Genesee 2000).

Research reports on FLES over the past thirty years has systematically indicated a correlation between early foreign or second language learning and improved learning in general: for example, students who learn or are exposed to another language on a regular basis early in life perform significantly better on both verbal and nonverbal intelligence tests, show increased development of verbal and spatial abilities, and score well above anticipated national norms in reading and mathematics (Stewart 2005; Early Language Learning Research White Paper Report 2008). A recent study from the Institute for Learning & Brain Sciences I-LABS at



the University of Washington goes further in establishing that bilingualism-related differences in brain activity are associated with higher executive functions (problem-solving, shifting attention, and other desirable cognitive traits) at a very early stage, when babies are about to speak their first words (Ramírez et al. 2016; McElroy 2016). The study also shows that compared with children from monolingual families, the brains of babies stimulated in early childhood through immersion in a bilingual context will remain open to learning new language sounds.

Despite the consistency of research findings that confirm the benefits of early foreign language exposure and the arguments for foreign language learning and cross-cultural education that accompanied the push toward globalization in the 1990s, such as the Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century first published by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) in 1996, the last two decades have seen a decrease

in interest in the learning of foreign languages in many schools in the United States (Rhodes, “Elementary School Foreign Language Teaching”). The Association for Early Learning Leaders’ 2016 conference clearly shows this: not a single presentation devoted to early language learning seems to be included in their program. This phenomenon did not happen for lack of will on the part of school children or teachers, but – as Nancy C. Rhodes concluded in her longitudinal study, *Elementary School Foreign Language Teaching: Lessons Learned Over Three Decades (1980–2010)* – for lack of understanding and appreciation by administrations of the role that acquiring another language early can play in the development of the whole child. “Envisioning a country where educators have taken heed of these lessons and in which the educational system promotes high-quality multilingual and multicultural education for all children is a wonderful dream” (Ibid. 129).

According to this article, although FLES programs experienced rapid growth in the

1950s and 1960s, many had disappeared by the late 1960s and early 1970s because of planning issues and a still developing consensus on appropriate methodologies for children. In response to the report of the President’s Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies (Carter 1979) the early 1980s saw an increase in early foreign language education programs until the 2000s. “A downturn in the economy, coupled with the effects of federal education legislation (No Child Left Behind), led to the closing of many public school early language programs” (Rhodes, “Elementary School Foreign Language Teaching” 116). In her bibliography, Rhodes cited many studies that identified key factors and the broader historical context that influenced elementary school language education at that time. When President Barack Obama recently emphasized the need to train linguistically competent, globally competitive students in the 21st century (Ibid.), foreign language educators across the country responded with well-designed

curricula. Sadly, budget cuts, poor planning and lack of qualified teachers have affected the implementation of such programs (Ibid. 117). As a result, Rhodes concludes, the overall position of foreign language learning within the curriculum at the elementary and secondary levels in the United States has not significantly improved over the last fifty years (Ibid. 127).

Another factor that has contributed to the low interest for FLES appears to be the lack of qualified teachers (Ibid. 128). Ideally, elementary school teachers should have the skills to teach the basics of a foreign language, but in many universities there is often not a faculty member with a specialization in foreign language teacher education. In response to this, collaboration and partnership between World Languages departments and Colleges of Education are becoming more prevalent (see the 2010 second edition of the World Languages Standards, produced by the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards for teachers of students from 3 years of age to 18 years and over).

In contrast, studies have shown that multilingualism is prominent in most European countries (Heinzmann 2013). As surveys show, the majority of Europeans learn languages only in school; this indicates the effectiveness of the European educational system in promoting the early learning of languages. In Finland, at least two foreign languages are part of the core curriculum for basic education beginning in the third year of elementary school (Kumpulainen 2015, 16-21). To note, Finnish 15-year-olds scored the highest in all four domains assessed by the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2003 survey comprising forty-one countries (Korhonen 2006). Adding to their success is the high proportion of teachers per student ratio. The success of Finnish education can be attributed to the fact that the country invests heavily in teachers. In Finland, any child who falls behind, in foreign language learning or another subject, is immediately taken care of by remedial classes until s/he is able to reintegrate into the regular classes. This approach, states Hancock (2011), is at the antipodes of the competitive model, with which the "USA muddled along in the middle for the past decade, when government officials have attempted to introduce marketplace competition into public schools" (2).

The lessons learned from leaders in the field of early foreign language learning over a thirty year period (1980-2010), as analyzed by Rhodes, emphasized the need to dispel common misconceptions about language learning, particularly at the elementary level, such as: children can only learn words or do not have the maturity to grasp complex sentence structures for instance. Instead it was established that language learning is a lifetime process, and education of school administrators is essential (Rhodes 122). In addition, Rhodes identified features of successful programs: (1) support by a team rather than just one language teacher or administrator, (2) sustainability after a start up grant or initial funding ends, (3) choice of language of instruction that is relevant to the community, (4) sufficient weekly time so that learners can progress, and (5) participation: "The entire school community should feel that the language program is central, rather than peripheral, to the curriculum" (Ibid. 118). The current focus on science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) has introduced both questions as to the necessity of FLES programs as well as those about the importance of the benefits of early language learning for STEM success. This study and other more recent ones confirm that there are schools which have successfully implemented early foreign language education in their

programs, that these young learners perform better on standardized tests across the disciplines, and that significant problems still face elementary foreign language programs, such as funding and integration in the curriculum (Richards 2015). These studies indicate that there is a groundswell of parents whose appreciation of multilingualism could be harnessed, with the belief that ACTFL advocacy campaigns need to focus on changing the mindset of school decision makers about the importance of having language begin as early as possible and administrators listening to parents' voices. It is about bringing change from the bottom up, as Howard Zinn argues (2008, 2009).

In essence, this literature review outlines the core belief that motivated the creation of the Fun With Languages project, a partnership between Murray State University (Modern Languages Department, Office of Regional Outreach) and The International Language Center (ILC). Many aspects of the FWL method respond to the guidelines proposed by the experts in the field of early language education, summed up, for instance, in the Early Language Research White Paper conducted by Early Advantage, an educational publisher of Foreign Language and English as a Second Language instructional programs (2008).

The Fun With Languages method, which follows the practice of "hear it, repeat it, say it" (HRS), places the emphasis on early oral repetition and follows three major principles:

(1) Acquiring native-like pronunciation.

As mentioned above, research has established that the age of acquisition is of critical importance for native-like grammar and pronunciation in second language (L2) acquisition (Uylings 2006). Although no critical period for semantics has yet been identified, researchers have concluded that L2 child language learners are more likely to obtain native-like pronunciation than adult language learners (Mayberry and Lock 2003; Flege, Mackay, and Piske 2002).

(2) Learning a variety of sounds through play.

Younger learners "are likely to be less language anxious than many older learners and hence may be more able to absorb language rather than block it out" (Johnstone 2002). The FWL/HRS method emphasizes the practice of a variety of sounds through play. As Kuhl, Tsao, and Liu (2003) stated, studies have shown that as early as 9 months old, children are capable of discerning differences among the phonetic units of languages, i.e., native and foreign language sounds. The study further indicated that this audio learning was only effective when taught by a live person. In the FWL/HRS method, the facilitator stresses the foreign language sounds when speaking to the children. Since the ludic element eliminates language anxiety, children are asked to switch gender voices, repeat a word in a burly man's voice, or a tiny mouse's voice, or with the roar of a lion, for instance, which allows the learners to experiment with many sounds.

(3) Making cognitive connections.

In the FWL/HRS method, a child understands quickly that one concept, e.g. bear in English, can be expressed with different sounds such as ours in French, oso in Spanish, (xióng, rising tone) in Chinese, kuma in Japanese, Bär in German. From a semantic point of view, when a child realizes that the relationship between names for the same object in different languages is arbitrary, he or she begins seeing how languages relate to each other and abstract thinking can become easier. Genesee and Cloud (1998) report that, provided children learn in a supportive language-rich environ-

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ment, “multilingualism is a key step in understanding and appreciating differences” because it brings educational, cognitive and socio-cultural benefits (p. 63). It is well established that early language learners are more creative and better problem solvers than students who do not study a second language (Stewart 2005; Landry 1974; Marcos 2001; Weatherford 1986).

Through its ludic, kinetic HRS method

Valérie Hendley is Director of the International Language Center (ILC) and project leader of the Fun With Languages Project. She is a French native speaker and lives in Mayfield, Kentucky. While living in England, she owned Le Club Français, a franchise that provided after-school clubs in French and Spanish for younger learners. She earned a French Baccalaureat in Foreign Languages (English, Italian, Spanish, Russian, Hebrew) in 1982. Her areas of expertise are: innovating programs with interactive games, drama, and phonics. In addition to coordinating all Fun With Languages clubs in the region, she also organizes workshops in French for the gifted and talented children through another Murray State program and coaches Calloway High school students in French.



Thérèse Saint Paul, Ph.D is from Belgium and studied English and Dutch at the University of Liège. She received her Ph.D in Comparative Medieval Literature (Arthurian and Celtic Studies) from The University of Edinburgh, Scotland and taught French at the Universities of Glasgow and Strathclyde (Scotland, UK), the University of Texas-Austin, the University of Pennsylvania (Lauder Institute/Wharton Business School) and is currently Associate Professor of French at Murray State University. Her areas of research and publications are Medieval Arthurian literature, Francophone (Belgian) literature and culture, French for (Green) Business. She developed and co-published an award winning multi-media French for Business Course (Strathclyde University Publications, 1989). In addition to the Fun With Languages initiative, she launched “An evening of French Poetry and Texts,” an event in which students of French perform annually on stage.



that engages all skills, Fun With Languages activates the process that enhances the development of the child as a whole.

PART 2

Fun with languages is an initiative that started in 2012 as a collaborative project between Valérie Hendley, director of The International Language Center and Dr. Thérèse Saint Paul, French professor at Murray State University. Hendley, a French native speaker, had moved from England to Mayfield, Kentucky. While living in England, she owned a language franchise called Le Club Français where children could join an after-school club to learn French or Spanish. When Saint Paul and Hendley met, they realized they shared the same beliefs about language learning: the earliest exposure, the better. They were both introduced to another language at a very young age, and that experience had been a determinant factor in their lives. They put their vision on paper and presented a grant proposal to the Office of Regional Outreach at Murray State University.

DESCRIPTION OF THE FUN WITH LANGUAGES INITIATIVE

Given the scholarship on the subject (summarized in Part One of this article), the goal of Fun with Languages is to introduce children to another language as early as preschool age.

The pilot was a success: it was tested in 2013, in seven elementary schools located in a single county for one hour per week, lasting ten weeks. 113 students registered. This very positive response encouraged Hendley and Saint Paul to apply for a full grant with the Office of Regional Outreach for 2014. The grant was secured and the program started in four counties in Western Kentucky. The project established a partnership of mutual benefit between ILC and the Department of Modern Languages at Murray State University. The ILC uses language students as language facilitators, and offers clubs in the five languages taught at the university: French, Spanish, German, Japanese and Chinese.

In 2015 the Fun with Languages Project received yet another full grant. For each viable club with ten hours of instruction, the grant gave the schools ten hours of language to be taught to a grade of their choice. So far, seventeen schools in nine different counties have benefited from Fun with Languages innovative language grants. At this point, Fun With Languages clubs can

be found not only in elementary schools, but also in middle schools. We are seeing our vision become a reality. Children who started language learning at the elementary school level are requesting that we launch clubs in their middle schools. Fun with Languages is having the desired impact.

Fun with Languages introduces learners to another language through games, songs, stories, and drama. Engaging the senses, as mentioned in Part One, is an essential component of our method. During the one-hour lesson the learner manipulates vocabulary and learns to use it in a hands-on/active discovery setting. The facilitators are chosen from advanced language students or native speakers with a background in early childhood or elementary education, although this is not a requirement. Students receive materials and training in the method but are primarily selected for their personality, such as their ability to create an engaging learning environment. We usually warn visitors to our clubs: “When you walk into a Fun with Languages club, do not be surprised to find children squealing and running around and shouting words in another language loudly and with a big smile on their faces.” Fun with Languages is not a program based on teaching grammar or aiming to make a child fluent in another language. Its mission is to introduce children to different sounds, to different ways of using their tongue in their mouth, and also to different cultures. We believe that learning is based in daily reality; and that children will learn if they are familiar with the content and the approach is user-friendly. Our goal is to take the child, within one hour, from what seems to be a very unfamiliar territory to a fun place where they can feel at home. We make that new territory part of their reality and hope that the experience will last a lifetime by expanding language learning opportunities for all children in elementary and secondary programs to better equip them with the skills needed to communicate effectively in multicultural settings and across the globe.

As indicated in Part One, while methods for the teaching and learning of world languages at an early age are still a focus of continual development, identification of developmental processes in early language learners and successful pedagogical research in this area have led to the establishment of core practices upon which programs like Fun With Languages have grown. Rhodes’s study based on interviews of early foreign

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language teachers clearly showed the volition to develop a grassroots movement that would place foreign language learning on the same plane as STEM (Rhodes 2014; Rhodes and Pufahl 2010). Fun With Languages has succeeded in establishing connections between some of the major stakeholders involved in early language learning: parents, teachers, and administrators. We are happily surprised with the positive results that our project has gained so far. It has started a momentum in this area of West Kentucky that we hope will boost the visibility, acceptability, and presence of foreign languages at all levels of education, including post-secondary and university.

¹ AELL “formerly known as the National Association of Child Care Professionals is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization committed to excellence by promoting leadership development and enhancing program quality through the National Accreditation Commission’s standards” (<www.earlylearningleaders.org>).

² PISA is the only international education survey initiated by the OECD to measure the knowledge and skills of 15-year-olds, i.e. when students in most countries end their compulsory schooling.

³ ILC is now called Pathos (a non-profit company)

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