

Languages in the News

3 Reasons to Stop Ignoring Cultural Differences While Learning a Language

In this blog posting, Lindsay McMahon, of English and Cultural Tutoring Services, based in Boston, MA, shares her expertise in the field of teaching about the importance of learning the culture of the people whose language you learn to speak in order to better understand the language itself. McMahon claims that when learning about other cultures, we tend to minimize differences between our own culture and the target culture and focus on the similarities. She believes this limits language learning and suggests three ways to deepen the experience.

1. Avoid word for word translation so as to communicate using the target culture's world view instead of our own individual world view.
2. Just knowing another language is not enough. She cites a recent study by the *Telegraph* that found professionals who were working abroad needed a strong understanding of the culture in order to be successful.
3. Build genuine connections with the people of the target culture. This means knowing and understanding the norms and values of the target culture in order to see the world through a different lens.

The author's final recommendation is to "put down your grammar book and start with culture."

Click here to read [3 Reasons to Stop Ignoring Cultural Differences While Learning a Language](#) by Livemocha.

Bilingual Education Law: Illinois Governor Signs Legislation To Strengthen Language Programs

The governor of Illinois recently signed legislation to strengthen the role of Bilingual Parent Advisory Councils in districts throughout the state. The legislation has two goals:

1. The bill allows for bilingual parent councils to take greater leadership roles in evaluating and making recommendations regarding bilingual education programs in their areas.
2. The legislation provides the framework for 'parent academies' to help parents of English language learners navigate the educational system and advocate for their child's academic success.

The governor hopes to make Illinois a model for bilingual education policies in the country.

Click here to access the video [Bilingual Education Law: Illinois Governor Signs Legislation To Strengthen Language Programs](#).

This issue of *Newsworthy* was compiled by Tammy Dann. Send any comments, questions or information for future issues to her at tdann@nnell.org

Thank you to Heather Hendry, Shanon Shreffler, Josh Hem Lee and Andrea Suarez for providing the links and Amy Murphy for the apps used in this issue.

Thank you to Amy Murphy, Kennedy Shultz, Sally Hood, and Veronica Guevara for their work writing summaries.

Tips and Tools for Early Language

WEBSITES

Languages Online

This site offers games and support for Chinese, French, German, Indonesian, Italian, Macedonian, Spanish, Turkish, and ESL. They have song downloads, and memory games in a variety of languages.

The game portion offers step-by-step instructions on how to make a game.

Click here to access [Languages Online](#).

Chillola

Chillola is a website that brings together numerous free language resources for parents, teachers, and children. The colorful images introduce children to thematic vocabulary such as colors, numbers, foods, and opposites. The languages available are English, French, Spanish, Italian and German.

For vocabulary practice, click on an image to hear each word spoken by a native speaker. In addition to audio resources, the site offers printable worksheets and activities, and a list of game and activity websites designed for kids. Children can submit artwork to the site for their on-line gallery and print out a Chillola Promise, pledging to be a good world citizen.

Click here to access [Chillola](#).

APPS for iPads, iPods and iPhones

Animoto

Animoto is a free online video slideshow producer that allows you to upload photos and short video clips to create professional looking videos within minutes. Music and text may also be added and by utilizing an educational account, the number of movies you can create is unlimited.

In the free Animoto Videos app, you may access your account straight from your iPad. Students become the stars when they watch and learn from classmates and even create their own videos within the iPad app.

Guess `em

This free version of "Guess Who" is a way for students to practice physical descriptions as a whole class or in a small group setting. One basic game set is provided that has 24 culturally diverse people and an additional set with farm animals is included.

The student who chooses a character may call on other students to ask questions in the target language such as "Is the person wearing a hat?" To hide a character, just tap once on his/her picture. If one is hidden accidentally, tap the picture again. Since there is no written or spoken language other than the names of characters, this app adapts easily to fit any foreign language classroom.