

# FLESNEWS

NATIONAL NETWORK FOR EARLY LANGUAGE LEARNING

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Spring 1992

## Ferndale Builds Foreign Language Competence in Grades 1 through 12

*Lynn Haire  
Foreign Language Coordinator  
Ferndale Public Schools, Ferndale, Michigan*

The public schools in Ferndale, Michigan, are now in the eleventh year of establishing an articulated, proficiency-based foreign language program in grades 1-12. Ferndale's program has already become a nationally recognized model for its K-8 sequence and the Ferndale curriculum and instructional materials have been made available to schools throughout the United States.

### **Program Background**

In 1980 the Ferndale Board of Education set as one of its goals "the continued improvement of curriculum coordination from kindergarten through 12th grade, especially looking at the possibility of developing a comprehensive foreign language program from kindergarten through high school." As a result, a study committee was formed to investigate the feasibility of introducing foreign language study in Ferndale's elementary schools.

Committee members were especially interested in research that reported a positive relationship between long-term foreign language study and English skills. The committee decided that although the research was inconclusive, it was quite convincing. The group also decided that giving children proficiency in a foreign language was reason enough to establish a program.

The committee surveyed Ferndale's elementary school parents and was surprised to learn that over 90 percent of those who responded had the idea of adding foreign language instruction in the elementary

### **Program Model and Implementation**

The study committee recommended to the Board of Education a pilot elementary foreign language program for the 1981-82 school

year. Kindergartners and first graders at two elementary schools were involved in daily German lessons, provided by an elementary-certified teacher who spoke German with near-native fluency.

Based on the success of the pilot, the Board of Education approved expansion to the other six elementary schools for the 1982-83 school year, adding French and Spanish instruction. In each school only one language was offered and, as in the pilot, only kindergartners and first graders were initially involved. The program has subsequently expanded a grade level each year and is currently articulated through grade 11.

Today, all elementary school children in grades 1-12 in Ferndale receive foreign language instruction as part of their normal school day. Elementary-certified language specialists visit each classroom daily: 20 minutes for grades 1-3 and 30 minutes for grades 4-6. Classes are taught entirely in the foreign language, which provides an intense language experience for the students. Ferndale's elementary program is for this reason considered an "intensive FLES" program (Rhodes & Oxford, 1987).

At the junior high level, students may elect to continue studying the language they had in elementary school. These articulated courses are year-long electives, which meet daily for approximately 45 minutes. As at the elementary level, instruction is provided entirely in the foreign language. Students new to the district, or those wishing to switch languages, must wait until ninth grade to begin studying a language. Currently, approximately 65 percent of Ferndale students elect to continue their language study at the junior high.

There are two tracks of foreign language study at Ferndale High School. Students from the elementary and junior high programs elect courses in the "continuing" foreign language track. Students studying a language for the first time enroll in "introductory" language courses. As previously mentioned, the "continuing" program is now articulated through grade 11 and will reach full implementation with the addition of grade 12 during the 1992-93 school year.

*(Continued on page 4)*

# Notes from the President

*FLES NEWS* needs contributing editors—can you help? Please take seriously this opportunity to make a contribution to your colleagues and your profession and consider responding to the call for editors detailed elsewhere in this issue.

These contributing editors also need materials to work with, materials only you can provide: classroom ideas, suggestions for materials to review, notices of meetings and calls for papers, articles about theory, policy, and practice. Most of us have come to depend on this newsletter for up-to-date information about our rapidly changing field, for classroom insights and ideas, and for reviews of helpful materials and resources. And for the quality and variety we have come to expect, we have to depend on each other. Even if you have never written anything before—except perhaps a term-paper or two—consider sharing your best ideas, or describing the articulation strategy that works in your school, or the public relations idea that paid off, or how a local business person or politician became your supporter. Writing takes time, and classroom foreign language teachers are probably the busiest people in the entire school. When they manage to make the time to write about what they do, their articles are among the most read and appreciated in any publication! Your contribution doesn't need to be lengthy, and "scholarly language" is definitely not a requirement!

You can help in other ways, too. If you hear a speaker or attend a workshop that has a message everyone should hear, suggest to the presenter that she or he contribute something to *FLES NEWS*. You might also suggest to the editor or one of the contributing editors that they contact the presenter and invite an article. When you attend a conference with a NNELL networking session, join the colleagues who share your interests and make known your concerns, your needs, and your solutions. Your suggestions about *FLES NEWS* and NNELL will be welcomed and taken seriously.

NNELL and *FLES NEWS* came into being because we all felt a deep need to share, to feel that we are not working alone. I invite you to reach out this spring—offer your services, your writing, your involvement—and help our National Network for Early Language Learning to be a stronger and more effective connection for all of us.

**Carol Ann Pesola**

Associate Professor of Education  
Concordia College, Moorhead, MN 56562

*FLES NEWS* is a newsletter for educators interested in providing quality foreign language instruction for children. The newsletter provides information on classroom activities, resources, various teaching methods, recent research, upcoming conferences, and information on how to publicize elementary foreign language programs. *FLES NEWS* provides a means of sharing information, ideas, and concerns among teachers, administrators, researchers, and others who are interested in the teaching of foreign languages to young children.

*FLES NEWS* is published three times a year (fall, winter, and spring) by the National Network for Early Language Learning (NNELL): Marcia Rosenbusch, editor; Carol Ann Pesola, president. Executive committee members are: Carolyn Andrade, first vice-president; Audrey Heining-Boynton, second vice-president; Donna Grundstad, secretary; Sonia Torres, treasurer.

Contributing editors for the newsletter by topic are: *Classroom activities* Donna Grundstad, Iowa City Community School District, 509 S. Dubuque St., Iowa City, IA 52240; *Conferences* Jane G. Graveen, Glastonbury Public Schools, Glastonbury, CT 06033; *Funding information and new legislation* Joint National Committee for Languages, 300 Eye St., NE, Suite 211, Washington, DC 20002; *Publicizing FLES* Carolyn Andrade, Cincinnati Public Schools, 120 E. 9th St., Cincinnati, OH 45202; *Research* Elsa Statzner, University of Minnesota, Second Languages and Cultures, 125 Peik Hall, Minneapolis, MN 55455; *French resources* Myriam Chapman, Bank Street School for Children, 610 W. 112th St., New York, NY 10025; *Spanish resources* Barbara McDonald, A. F. Doerfler School, 3014 W. Scott St., Milwaukee, WI 53215; *German resources* Patricia Pillot, Harding Elementary School, 2920 Burdette, Ferndale, MI 48220; *Teaching methods* Audrey Heining-Boynton, Foreign Language Education, CB 3500, Peabody Hall, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3500.

Membership dues for NNELL, which include a subscription to *FLES NEWS*, are \$12/year (\$15 overseas). Please send your check to: Nancy Rhodes, Executive Secretary, National Network for Early Language Learning, Center for Applied Linguistics, 1118 22nd St., NW, Washington, DC 20037.

*FLES NEWS* wants to hear from its readers. Send letters to: Marcia H. Rosenbusch, Editor, Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, 300 Pearson Hall, Iowa State University, Ames, IA 50011. Send contributions to be considered for publication to the appropriate contributing editors at the addresses listed above. Deadlines for information are: fall issue—May 1; winter issue—Nov. 1; spring issue—Feb. 1.

Readers are encouraged to make copies of this newsletter and share them with colleagues. Articles may be reprinted citing *FLES NEWS*, National Network for Early Language Learning, as the source.

†Foreign Language in the Elementary School

## Conference Calendar

*International, national, and regional conferences and workshops are previewed in this section of the newsletter. Please send information on conferences and workshops to the Conferences Editor.*

### SUMMER/FALL 1992 CONFERENCES

*July 17–19: American Association of Teachers of French.* Strasbourg, France. AATF, F.M. Jenkins, 57 East Armory Ave., Champaign, IL 61820 (217-333-2842).

*July 19–22: American Association of Teachers of German.* Baden-Baden, Germany. AATG, Helene Zimmer-Loew, 112 Haddontowne Court, # 104, Cherry Hill, NJ 08034 (609-795-5553).

*August 9–13: American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese.* Cancún, Mexico. Enrique Ruiz-Fornells, 222 The Highlands, Tuscaloosa, AL 35404 (601-325-2041).

*October 15–18: Advocates for Language Learning.* Marina del Rey, CA. ALL, P.O. Box 1614, Independence, MO 64055 (816-871-6371).

**Conferences Editor: Jane G. Graveen**

# Become a Contributing Editor for *FLES NEWS*

*FLES NEWS* is searching for six new contributing editors, to begin their duties this summer. These openings have occurred because of resignations and because of the fact that the NNELL Executive Board has determined that board members shall not simultaneously serve as contributing editors for the newsletter.

Contributing editor appointments are made annually by the editor and are competitive positions. They may be renewed or reopened for competition each spring as determined by the editor. All contributing editors are expected to

- Meet the deadlines specified by the editor for submission of information.
- Submit complete and accurate information that they have checked for spelling, clarity, and accuracy.
- Verify that materials are in the publication format specified by the editor, are typed or legibly handwritten, and are double-spaced.

Brief descriptions of the duties for the available positions are as follows:

**Classroom activities:** Submit a total of nine activities per year, three each issue. Contributors must represent, as much as possible, all geographic areas of the United States. Written permission to publish the activity ideas must be obtained from contributors and must accompany the submissions. *Applicants need to define a plan for obtaining activity ideas and specify how they will encourage representation from a variety of geographical areas.*

**Conferences:** Submit information on international, national, and regional conferences and workshops for the upcoming season: spring issue for fall; fall issue for winter and spring; winter issue for spring and summer. *Applicants need to define a plan for obtaining the conference information and for verifying the accuracy of the information.*

**Funding information and new legislation:** Submit information about sources for funding elementary school foreign language research, teacher preparation, materials development, and programs; describe selected projects that have received funding; report on the status and implications of national and state legislation. *Applicants need to define a plan for obtaining the grant funding and legislation information.*

**Teaching methods:** Solicit, edit, and submit articles on methods and strategies for the classroom. *Applicants need to define a plan for possible topics to be addressed and a plan for obtaining articles.*

**Publicizing FLES:** Provide information about how school and community support can be built for programs. Solicit, edit, and submit articles. *Applicants need to define a plan for possible topics to be addressed and a plan for obtaining articles.*

**Research:** Request articles from second language researchers in order to stimulate thinking about the focus and direction of research. Report on research results that have important implications for early language learning. *Applicants need to submit a plan for obtaining articles, and demonstrate ability to comprehend research results.*

To apply for one or more contributing editor positions, submit to the editor by June 30:

1. A brief curriculum vitae or résumé including your name, home address, and telephone; your title, school address, and telephone; your professional training and work experience.
2. Include your summer address and telephone (if different from home).
3. State position/s for which you are applying.
4. Write a short paragraph explaining why you are interested in the contributing editor position/s.
5. Comply with the request for information included in the position descriptions above.

Factors affecting the selection of contributing editors will include quality of the application and, where possible, geographic representation. New contributing editors will assume their positions for the fall issue of *FLES NEWS*. Send applications to Marcia H. Rosenbusch, Editor, *FLES NEWS*, Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, Iowa State University, Ames, IA 50011 (515-294-4046).

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## Resources for Your Classroom

*Please submit directly to the appropriate resources editor any language-specific materials you would like considered for review. Other materials may be sent to the FLES NEWS editor for review.*

### German

Kind, Uwe. (1991). *Kinder lernen Deutsch talking t-shirts*. Philadelphia, PA: American Association of Teachers of German. Available from AATG, 112 Haddonstone Court, # 104, Cherry Hill, NJ 08034 (609-795-5553). Please print your school address and allow 4-6 weeks for delivery.

Ever heard of a talking t-shirt? Uwe Kind has created them to stimulate conversation in German classes. The newest ones are entitled *Kinder lernen Deutsch*, as they were created for the AATG project of the same name. The design features an illustrated grid children can use to talk about themselves and their interests. Shirts are white with a green, blue, and hot pink design in 50-50 cotton polyester fabric. They are available in a child's small size or an extra-large adult size. The *Basic KLD Talking T-packet* (\$7.00) includes one extra-large t-shirt, plus the *Teacher's Kit*, which contains teaching ideas using the t-shirt, a paper copy of the design (filled in), a paper copy of the t-shirt design with blank squares, and a transparency of the t-shirt design with blank squares. The *5 Talking T-packet* (\$33.00) includes, five talking t-shirts (please indicate size desired), along with

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## Ferndale (Continued from page 1)

### Teaching for Proficiency: Staffing and Curriculum

Most adults in this country will remember foreign language instruction that was very different from the proficiency-based approach used in Ferndale. Foreign language instruction has traditionally required students to master points of grammar in a somewhat predetermined sequence, the assumption being that conscious understanding of grammar was a prerequisite to acquiring the ability to communicate in another language.

Proficiency-based instruction, on the other hand, places students in communicative situations from the outset. It is assumed that students can "acquire the ability to communicate in another language directly without instruction in its grammar" (Krashen & Terrell, 1983). Students learn the second language much as they learned their first, namely by using it for communication. Grammar is implicit in emerging communicative competence, but students in the elementary grades are not asked to develop an explicit knowledge of its rules.

This fundamental change of focus has had several implications for staffing and curriculum in the Ferndale program:

1. *Curriculum development has been an enormous ongoing task.* Since Ferndale's proficiency-based program is based on the communicative needs of its students, it has not been possible to adopt a commercially available textbook or another district's curriculum. Curriculum guides specifying content and teaching activities have been and continue to be developed for each grade level of instruction.
2. *Ferndale's foreign language curriculum is interdisciplinary and includes many content-based lessons and teaching strategies.* Lessons are organized around age-appropriate, meaningful topics that provide the communicative contexts for language learning. One way to make the content of the foreign language instruction age-appropriate and meaningful has been to reinforce, enrich, or teach concepts taught in the general curriculum. When learning numbers in the foreign language, for example, students do not merely learn to count, but also practice such elementary math concepts as one-to-one correspondence, numeral recognition, sequencing, and more and less. Likewise, older students are able to combine a review of numbers in the foreign language with practice of higher-level math skills.
3. *Lessons are conducted entirely in the foreign language.* The language specialist must therefore speak the language fluently. As a result, an oral interview in the second language is part of the hiring process.
4. *Instructional activities look and sound different.* Since there is to be no recourse to English, classroom activities rely heavily on aids to understanding, such as visual props and realia. Movement and physical activity are also important elements of instruction. Grammar-based repetition drills are replaced by communicative exchanges, teacher-centered activities are often replaced by student-centered group or partner work. The target language becomes the language of teacher-student and, eventually, student-student communication.
5. *Alternative forms of assessment have become necessary.* In a traditional grammar-based program, students generally were given written tests to demonstrate their knowledge about grammar. In a proficiency-based program, a student's proficiency in each language skill must be carefully and appropriately assessed. It would be inappropriate, for example, to take a writing sample as a measure of a student's ability to speak the language.
6. *Foreign language staff needs in-service training.* The proficiency-based approach requires many veteran secondary language

teachers to make several fundamental changes in their classroom practices. Furthermore, language specialists at the elementary level need to gain an understanding of child development and the general elementary curriculum in order to plan age-appropriate, content-based activities. In Michigan, elementary teacher certification is required to teach a foreign language in an elementary school.

### Program Evaluation

Dr. Roger McCaig, Director of Research and Evaluation for Grosse Pointe Public Schools, was hired in 1983 by Ferndale Public Schools to conduct a longitudinal study to investigate the effect of the elementary foreign language program on the acquisition and development of basic skills.

The experimental group and control group were identified as third graders in four schools who had participated in the elementary foreign language program and third graders from the remaining four elementary schools that did not yet offer foreign language instruction in third grade. The students in each group were matched on the basis of gender and verbal ability as established on the Test of Cognitive Skills administered by Ferndale in the third grade.

Data were collected and compared over the next four years in the areas of reading, vocabulary, listening, spelling, and writing (in English). Scaled scores from the reading, vocabulary, and listening portions of the Stanford Achievement Test as well as raw scores on a spelling test and level scores on the Ferndale Writing Test were used to make the comparisons.

In a series of reports to the Ferndale Board of Education, Dr. McCaig concluded that "participation in the Elementary Foreign Language Program appears to be neither beneficial nor harmful to students' acquisition and development of basic English language skills (reading, vocabulary, listening, spelling and writing)" (McCaig, 1990). In interpreting these results, Dr. McCaig was careful to emphasize to the Board of Education the positive nature of his findings. "The evidence gathered . . . is conclusive that participation in the Elementary Foreign Language Program is not detrimental to the acquisition and development of basic skills. The program is, therefore, a desirable educational opportunity since students acquire knowledge of a foreign language without sacrificing learning in the basic skills."

In a subsequent substudy, Dr. McCaig also found that "students who have participated in the Elementary Foreign Language Program are far more likely to continue the study of foreign language in grade 10 than students who begin the study of foreign language at a later time, for example, in junior high school or high school." Of the students who began studying a foreign language in elementary school, 65 percent continued with that same language through junior high. Of these students, 90 percent elected to continue the study of that language through ninth and tenth grade. Ninth grade starters, on the other hand, had an average continuation rate of 49 percent in the tenth grade.

Ferndale's foreign language teachers have noticed these changes in the classroom. Whereas upper level foreign language courses (third- and fourth-year courses) traditionally served the academic, college-bound elite, similar language classes now serve students of varying abilities, many of whom are not college-bound.

### Student Proficiency

The question of how proficient Ferndale's students various points in the Foreign Language Program remains difficult to answer. The effective assessment of language proficiency is, however, a concern of the entire profession. Foreign language education

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## Colloquium Focuses on Elementary School Foreign Language Learning

Fourteen foreign language professionals with a special interest and/or expertise in early language learning took part in a colloquium that met in New York City, September 19–22, 1991. The colloquium was organized by Goethe House, New York, and the American Association of Teachers of German and was supported by Goethe Institute, Munich. Six central questions were addressed during the colloquium:

- What are the aims and objectives of elementary school education in the United States?
- What is the role of foreign language learning in the elementary school curriculum?
- What is the case for German in the elementary school?
- How can content, culture, and skill building be combined in foreign language learning?
- How can the needs of elementary school children be met?
- What are appropriate teaching methods for the elementary school foreign language program?

The format of the colloquium was that of short presentations followed by discussion. The keynote presentation, "Components of an Elementary Curriculum," was given by Connie Gonser, Supervisor of Curriculum, School District of the City of Royal Oak, Michigan.

One of the goals was to draft a definition of the term *FLES* to be circulated for reaction within the profession. Since there is a wide range of programs that are labeled *FLES*, there has been confusion as to what characteristics distinguish *FLES* from other program models. The following definition was drafted:

### What is a FLES program?

A *FLES* program is a presecondary program that is articulated vertically throughout the entire program sequence.

In a *FLES* program a student studies a single language throughout the program sequence. (This does not imply that only one language is offered throughout the school district.)

Classes in a *FLES* program meet a minimum of every other day, for a minimum average of 75 minutes per week. Classes meet within the school day, throughout the entire school year.

A *FLES* program results in language proficiency outcomes that involve the production and comprehension of meaningful messages in the communicative setting.

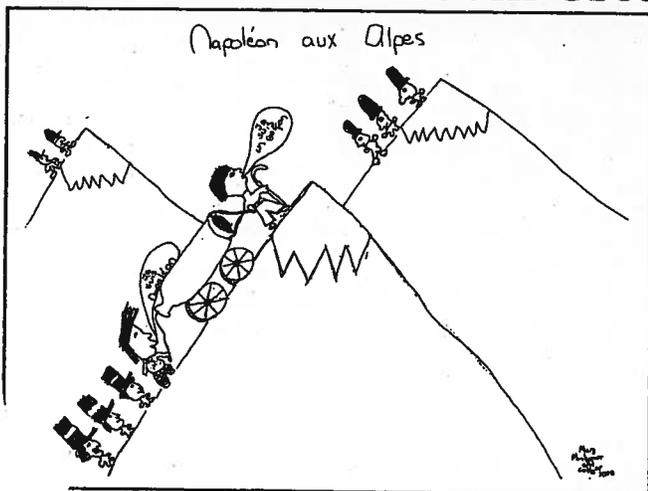
Teachers in a *FLES* program have both language proficiency and the professional knowledge and skills necessary for effective foreign language instruction at the elementary school level.

Participants in the colloquium also proposed an information bank to include:

1. An inclusive listing of German *FLES* programs in this country.
2. A collection of videotapes and sample lesson plans from a variety of programs.
3. Language proficiency outcomes for *FLES* programs so that outcomes of various models can be compared and contrasted.

The proceedings of the colloquium, including the content of each of the presentations and the discussions, will be published in 1992. Watch for information in a future issue of *FLES NEWS* about the availability of this important document.

## Children's Classroom Creations



Mary Montgomery and Collyer Klee  
 5th Grade  
 St. Edmunds Academy  
 Pittsburgh, PA  
 Valerie Stones, French Teacher

*FLES NEWS* enjoys including children's work in the second language. We encourage you to send works that lend themselves to copying, as line drawings, short stories, or poems. If you would like a work returned to you, please enclose a stamped self-addressed envelope. Please include the child's name, age, school, and teacher's name, as well as written permission from the child and his or her parents or guardians. Send children's work to the editor, Marcia Rosenbusch.

## Classroom Resources (Continued from page 3)

the *Teacher's Kit*. An audio cassette tape of songs for practicing expressions used on the t-shirt has also just been released. This professionally recorded tape of upbeat music helps the students learn the vocabulary and phrases in the best way possible—by singing along. Although some English is used in the introduction, the songs themselves are all in German. All of these items have tremendous “kid appeal” and are wonderful for use in foreign language week lessons, festivals, promotional activities and contests, or as a highly motivating addition to clothing units.

### German Resources Editor: Pat Pillot

#### French

Dès, H. *Le Beau Tambour*, vol. 6. France: Musidisc. Available from *French for Fun*, 4965 Hames Drive, Concord, CA 94521.

For a musical change of pace, get to know the songs of Henri Dès. This Swiss singer-composer has been charming French-speaking children for over 10 years. His songs are truly delightful. He enters into a child's world, and reflects the child's sense of wonderment and playfulness and the bittersweet tug of childhood relationships. His melodies are sweet, lively, and contemporary. My students in sixth through eighth grade adore him and compare him to the Canadian Rafi—although, unlike Rafi's work, all of the Dès songs are original. The words of most songs are easily learned—most involve a lot of repetition. Even if you use Henri Dès only as background music during an art activity, for example, you'll notice that children pick up the melody and many of the words. I recommend *Le Beau Tambour*, vol. 6 in the series.

### French Resources Editor: Myriam Chapman

#### Spanish

Van Allen, R. (1987). *Read-Aloud Predictable Storybooks*. Allen, TX: DLM Teaching Resources. Available from DLM, P.O. Box 4000, One DLM Park, Allen, Texas 75002. The 10-book collection plus teacher's guide is \$75.00, plus 9 percent for shipping and handling.

Big books are expensive, but you can stretch your dollar by investing in these large predictable Spanish-language storybooks. Their size (9" by 12") is nearly perfect for a large group because the books are manageable for the teacher, yet the pictures are big enough for all students to see. Younger students (K-5) will delight in this 10-book collection of imaginative stories designed for read-aloud sessions. Children listen to the stories and repeat them in chorus, becoming aware of the relationship between what they know about their second language and what they see in printed form.

A teacher's guide with 22 blackline masters and suggested art and creative writing activities is included. Since the complete text of each storybook is provided in the guide with permission granted for duplication, children are able to create a personal copy of the story, adding their own illustrations.

### Spanish Resources Editor: Barbara McDonald

## Activities for Your Classroom

**Teachers:** Please submit a favorite classroom activity for publication in FLES NEWS by sending a description in the following format: Title, objective, materials, and procedure. You may include any pictures or drawings as illustrations. Send with your name, address, and telephone number to the editor, Marcia Rosenbusch.

### Title: Paper-Cutting Activity

#### Objective:

The students will learn to name shapes and colors and to count them using grouping strategies.

#### Materials:

Scissors  
9" x 12" colored construction paper

#### Procedure:

The students name the shape and color of the uncut paper the teacher holds. The teacher cuts the rectangle in half to form two more rectangles and asks what shapes and how many there are. The students respond in the target language, “two rectangles” and “red.” Placing them on the floor in the center of the children's circle, the teacher correctly models, “Yes, there are two red rectangles.”

Taking one of the two shapes, the teacher cuts diagonally from one corner to the other. The students identify “two triangles” and “red.” The teacher correctly models, “Yes, there are two red triangles” and places them on the floor by the other shapes. Collectively, all the shapes will be identified.

Taking the second paper, which the students will again identify in shape and color, the teacher cuts a strip off one end of the green rectangle to form a square and another rectangle that the students identify, “one rectangle,” and “green,” “one square,” and “green.” The teacher models again, “Yes, there is a green rectangle and a green square.” Placing them on the floor in groups of like shapes or in groups of like colors allows more counting. The group will count the total number of shapes and/or colors.

Taking the green rectangle, the teacher cuts a square off one corner. After the triangle shape is identified, the teacher cuts a circle from the square and places it by the other shapes after the students have identified “circle” and “green.” Depending on the time and interest of the group, more shapes may be cut and added, identified, and always tallied.

**Contributor:** Diane Coy  
Titonka and Thompson, Iowa, Elementary  
Schools  
Rt. 2, Box 249  
Elmore, MN 56027

### Classroom Activities Editor: Donna Grundstad

# Changing Negative Perceptions of Foreign Languages

*Paula K. Strupeck  
Advocates for Language Learning, Chicago Chapter  
Chicago, Illinois*

As foreign language advocates we have encouraged our students to see the world through French, German, Spanish, or Japanese eyes. Our own immediate challenge as elementary school foreign language educators is to understand and appreciate the perspective of a parent, a classroom teacher, or an administrator when they question our foreign language program. We can begin by exercising our communication skills in listening to their concerns.

## Understanding Negative Perceptions

Why do we need foreign languages? We can answer this question with examples of businesses and government agencies that have failed in their international ventures due to a lack of linguistic and cultural proficiency. This, however, may not be the real issue. When I took time to listen to my colleague Ann Watson, I gained an appreciation of how this classroom teacher's negative attitude was formed.

Ann recalls that as an eighth-grader she took the entrance test for high school and did not place high enough to take a foreign language. Thus, her first encounter with foreign language gave her the message that she was dumb and that foreign language was only for smart people.

As a high school junior she still wanted to take a foreign language. She chose Spanish because it was reported to be easier and, therefore, better for a dumb person like herself. She considered herself to be language-disabled and therefore looked for the less-menacing option, still yearning to be part of the club. The drill and kill method so typical of the foreign language tradition swept Ann into an abyss of her own sense of failure. She was counseled to drop Spanish.

Anxious, but still curious, she signed up for a beginning Spanish course in college, but dropped it again when her grades were Ds.

As a teacher, when the principal informed her that she would have French in her classroom and that she would be participating with the students, she experienced a cold sweat of remembering and experiencing herself as a failure at language.

Ann's discouraging experience with a foreign language is, unfortunately, not uncommon. We need to respect this reality and demonstrate our sensitivity to this issue. The administrator or parent who says that language is not important is quite possibly saying, "I had a miserable experience with foreign language. I hated the feeling that I couldn't learn it. I feel isolated from and inferior to people who speak a foreign language."

## Changing Negative Perceptions

How we deal with negative reactions to our foreign language program is vitally important. We must first try to understand why the negative perceptions exist. Then we must find ways to change them. One way is to engage parents in a mini foreign language lesson at a parent meeting. The parents should take part in the lesson exactly

as their children do in class. Having tried this with parent groups, I can attest to the excited responses. The parents feel successful. They wish that they had learned the foreign language in this way. They begin to understand their children's positive and enthusiastic responses to the program. They become supporters of the foreign language program.

We also need to cultivate relationships with classroom teachers. We must take the initiative to communicate with them. We should tell them of our interest in integrating selected math, science, social studies, and literature concepts into the foreign language program. When they also become excited about these possibilities, we need to work with them to identify the areas of their curriculum that can be appropriately addressed or reinforced in the foreign language.

We might also establish a French-for-Teachers class so that they can also learn French. They may want to begin to bring French into their own classroom when the foreign language teacher is not there. A class for teachers should be taught exactly as the children are taught. We need to create an environment of comprehension and success; we can use hands-on, concrete activities; and we can demonstrate that we respect the needs of each individual.

An effort in a Chicago public school to integrate foreign language into the school day rather than as a before-school program was successful in great part because a weekly French-for-Teachers class so enthused the participating teachers that they lobbied with the parents to implement the program. These teachers could speak from experience about the positive outcomes of studying a foreign language: as a vehicle for learning and reinforcing other skills; and helping to develop a positive self-image.

We need to be sure that we understand the perspective of the parents, classroom teachers, and administrators in our school program. And we must be sure we are helping them understand what a positive experience foreign language learning can be. In this way we build a better experience for our young learners, and we build a stronger foreign language program for our school.

Teaching Methods Editor: Audrey Heining-Boynton

## New Mailing Address

NNELL now has a permanent mailing address. Please use this address for all correspondence and make sure that your school librarian or person responsible for ordering your subscription has the correct address.

National Network for Early Language Learning  
Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL)  
1118 22nd St. NW  
Washington, DC 20037  
USA

## Ferndale (Continued from page 4)

everywhere are asking the same questions: "How do I assess the language proficiency of my students?" "How does their proficiency compare to the proficiency of students in other programs?"

There are no standardized achievement tests capable of measuring a student's ability to communicate in the foreign language. Such tests, which rely heavily on multiple-choice items, are better used to test student knowledge about discrete points of grammar or vocabulary.

To address this problem, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) developed the *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines*. The guidelines provide descriptions of language learners' abilities at succeeding levels and have become a recognized standard for rating language proficiency.

Nonetheless, assessment of language proficiency remains problematical. To receive an official ACTFL oral proficiency rating, a student must be given an Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) by a certified OPI tester. This form of assessment would be very costly to a school district and has therefore not been widely used, resulting in a lack of data for comparison purposes. A further drawback of the ACTFL guidelines is that they describe the language abilities of *adult* language learners and therefore have only limited applicability in the assessment of language proficiency of children and young adolescents.

As a result of these concerns, Ferndale's assessment of student proficiency in the foreign language has been primarily informal to date. Checklists of student progress toward grade-level outcomes and ongoing teacher observations of students' abilities to communicate in the foreign language have led to some generalizations about what most students can do at various points in the foreign language program.

### Checking Student Progress

By the end of the sixth grade, most Ferndale students can perform the aural-oral language functions at the novice-high level, as described in Wisconsin's *Guide to Curriculum Planning in Foreign Language* (1986). The Wisconsin guide based its descriptions of language proficiency levels on the ACTFL guidelines. Most sixth graders communicate primarily with memorized material and give single sentence answers to questions. Several students, however, are already beginning to create with the language and can ask simple questions to initiate and maintain very simple face-to-face conversations.

By the end of tenth grade, most students are somewhere in the mid- to high-intermediate range, as put forth in the Wisconsin guide. To varying degrees they have the listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills to describe and narrate in the past, present, and future. They are capable of carrying on casual conversations and handling situations that present problems or unexpected events. On some topics they are also able to produce several sentences in extended discourse.

The above observations were corroborated in 1991 by an outside evaluator who was hired by Ferndale to conduct modified oral interviews of tenth grade German students. The evaluator, Paula Sanders, a high school German teacher from Rockford, Michigan, was hired because of her ability to speak German and to work with high school students.

The modified interview procedure used was developed by the Colorado State Department of Education under the name of *Proficiency Sample Project (PSP)* (Colorado Department of Education, 1990). The PSP offers an assessment instrument that includes criteria for rating students on a proficiency scale based on the ACTFL

guidelines. The PSP rating scale includes five beginner levels and three mid-levels. The highest PSP rating is "Possible Intermediate" or "Ready for ACTFL/ETS Oral Proficiency Interview."

All Ferndale tenth graders in the continuing program received mid-level ratings in the 1991 study. In addition, the evaluator was impressed by what she called the students' "comfort level" with the language. Unlike most high school language students in her experience, Ferndale's students seemed "at home" with the second language and enjoyed the opportunity to converse in it.

The work on assessing students' language proficiency continues in Ferndale. Current efforts include the analysis of data from the 1991 proficiency study, adaptation of the Colorado instrument for use in the elementary and middle schools, and investigation into portfolio assessments.

### Program Cost

Program expenses currently total approximately 2 percent of Ferndale School District's annual budget. Staffing costs are the major expense. Ferndale employs a total of 20.5 full-time-equivalent (FTE) foreign language teachers to operate its foreign language programs at all levels. At the elementary level, 12.5 FTE language teachers serve some 2,800 students, while 3.5 FTE teachers serve 325 junior high students and 4.5 FTE teachers serve just over 400 high school students. Ferndale also employs a part-time coordinator and a full-time aide to facilitate the program.

Other program expenses include funding for curriculum development, professional development activities, and student materials, although these expenses combined are less than an average teacher's salary.

Ferndale's program has been funded primarily by local revenues. During the early years of the program, the district used \$55,000 in Title IV-C federal funds and received grants totaling \$59,000 from the State Department of Education to build the program.

An often-asked question is, How can a school district with limited per capita student expenditures, such as Ferndale's, afford such an intensive program? The Ferndale Board of Education has supplied the answer, The money *is* there. It is a matter of priorities.

The Ferndale curriculum and the McCaig report are available from Lynn Haire, Ferndale Public Schools, 881 Pinecrest, Ferndale, MI 48220.

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# NATIONAL NETWORK FOR EARLY LANGUAGE LEARNING

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## MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL NOTICE

This is the last issue in your subscription of *FLES NEWS* (all subscriptions run from September through May). Send in your check and the form below for a 1992-1993 membership in the National Network for Early Language Learning and for a subscription to *FLES NEWS*. You may make copies of this order form for your colleagues. **Renew now so you won't forget!** You will not receive the fall issue unless you renew.

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### Membership Form (1992-1993)

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Center for Applied Linguistics  
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# Notices

## Elementary School (K-8) Foreign Language Teacher Education Curriculum

A teacher education curriculum for the preparation of elementary school foreign language teachers at universities, teacher preparation institutes, and school district in-service programs is now available.

The curriculum was developed by a team of elementary school foreign language teachers and university professors in North Carolina as part of a joint North Carolina Department of Public Instruction and Center for Applied Linguistics project to improve the preparation of elementary school foreign language teachers at institutions of higher learning.

The 51-page spiral-bound curriculum includes 14 elementary school foreign language teacher competencies (what teachers should be able to do and should be knowledgeable about); instructional experiences, resources, and evaluation procedures for fulfilling these competencies; and a bibliography and an extensive list of resources. Additional information is provided on the elementary school foreign language teacher education project funded by the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (U.S. Department of Education).

Send check or purchase order for \$8.00, made payable to ERIC, to: User Services, ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics, Center for Applied Linguistics, 1118 22nd St. NW, Washington, DC 20037 (202-429-9292).

## See Your Ideas in Print

Would you like to see your ideas in print? Would you like to assist elementary school colleagues? Would you like to contribute to the success of elementary school foreign language programs in other areas?

The elementary school commissions of the American Association of Teachers of French and the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese are compiling ideas, techniques, games, and crafts for use in elementary school foreign language programs. If you are interested in having your game or technique included, please submit your ideas. The name and school affiliation of each contributor will be acknowledged. The publication is a nonprofit venture and will be distributed at minimal cost.

Send your name, school affiliation and address, the title of your activity or game, objective/s, age group, time required, and the procedure. Try to give examples in as many languages as possible. If you use only one foreign language, please give examples in English also. Drawings, patterns, maps, etc., may be included. Send your contribution to Virginia Gramer, Hinsdale Elementary Schools, 5905 S. County Line Rd., Hinsdale, IL 60521 or to Mary Snowski, Meadowbrook School, Farm Road, Weston, MA 0193.

## Interactive Videodisc Technology, Science, and the FLES Curriculum

A grant from the National Science Foundation to develop a prototype interactive videodisc to be used as a training program for FLES and elementary classroom teachers has been awarded to Dr. Richard J. McLeod from Michigan State University, and Dr. Ralph O. McLeod from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. The primary objective of this project is to determine the feasibility of increasing the quantity and quality of science education in the elementary schools.

Interactive videodisc technology was chosen for its rapid accessibility and ease of operation. Using Hypercard on a Macintosh, the program will combine both motion video and stills. Any combination of stills and motion can be accessed in less than one second (compared with the "fast-forward and rewind" features of video tape) thus providing the teacher with the ability to switch back and forth from science content of a particular lesson to language pedagogy, to science pedagogy, and so on. The combinations are limitless.

During Phase I of the project, three science activities will be targeted for use on the prototype disc. In addition to science and language pedagogy, the teacher will be able to "click" on science content, vocabulary in both Spanish and English, lesson plans for a particular activity, real-life applications, and alternative activities. Although this particular disc is for fourth grade, it will offer suggestions for "upgrading" and "downgrading" the activity. Virtually no typing will be required. The user will interact with the program using a mouse to click on an option or an icon.

Phase I of the project is expected to be finished by June 30, 1992. If you have suggestions or would like more information about the project, write to Dr. Ralph McLeod, Dept. of Foreign Languages, UNCC, Charlotte, NC 28223.

## Back Issues Available

All back issues of *FLES NEWS*, Volumes 1-4, are available from ERIC at your local university library on microfiche or paper copy. To order by mail, contact: Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), Document Reproduction Services, 7420 Fullerton Rd., Springfield, VA 22153-2852. Tel. 1-800-443-ERIC. The ERIC Document numbers are as follows:

1988 Volume 1	ED 299 828
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## National Research Center Reports

Four publications from the National Center for Research on Cultural Diversity and Second Language Learning's Report Series are now available. The Report Series is comprised of technical research reports and educational practice reports.

**Technical research report #1, *Sociological Foundations Supporting the Study of Cultural Diversity***, by Hugh Mehan, examines various aspects of the relationship between students' cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic background and their unequal access to educational opportunities.

**Technical research report #2, *Instructional Conversation: Teaching and Learning in Social Activity***, by Roland G. Tharp and Ronald Gallimore, offers a conceptual view of instructional conversations which model classroom discourse on the natural teaching found in homes and communities and contrasts that to the recitation model of teaching found in most classrooms.

**Educational practice report #1, *The Education of Linguistically and Culturally Diverse Students: Effective Instructional Practices***, by Eugene Garcia, discusses common attributes of schools and classrooms where language minority students have experienced high levels of academic success.

**Educational practice report #2, *Instructional Conversations and Their Classroom Application***, by Claude Goldenberg, defines the characteristics of instructional conversations and applies it to teaching situations, showing how this strategy can effectively foster critical thinking skills among language minority students.

The cost of each report is \$4.00. Orders must be accompanied with a check (made payable to the Center for Applied Linguistics). Send to: NCRCDSSL Dissemination Coordinator, Center for Applied Linguistics, 1118 22nd St., NW, Washington, DC 20037.

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