As we head into the holiday season, I would like to extend sincere thanks to all the World Language educators who make a difference in students’ lives every day. With your dedication and commitment to teaching for proficiency, you are opening doors for young people, not only to communicate in another language, but also to understand and appreciate other perspectives offered through different languages. As you prepare for the needed vacation, please know how much we appreciate you building lifelong language learners.

At the CT COLT conference we all benefited from so many great sessions on Sunday and Monday. It was an honor to recognize Richard de Meij as last year’s CT COLT ToY and Meiching Chang as the current CT COLT ToY because they both bring such passion and energy to their classrooms. We also heard an inspirational keynote speech from the ACTFL Teacher of the Year, Rebecca Aubrey. Rebecca’s inspiring message about how to pack and plan for the journey offered insight, humor and best practices for language instruction. The theme of planning for the journey was quite apropos given the fact that she just completed her tour to all regional conferences in the U.S. and spent time advocating for languages on Capitol Hill. Rebecca concluded her journey at the 2019 Opening Ceremony for ACTFL’s Conference in Washington D.C. with 7800 educators who applauded her for the advocacy work she did this year.

There were so many incredible learning opportunities at the ACTFL Conference and it was wonderful to have so much representation of CT COLT members who presented and attended the national conference. With many participants tweeting and sharing information, you may have been able to follow the highlights from CT. If you are on Twitter, please follow @CT_COLT to get updates and resources. I also encourage you to read the article by a conference committee member, Jill Griswold, who wrote about her learning, Making the Most of One Day at ACTFL 2019: My Top 5 Takeaways.

CT COLT strives to represent many languages and advocating for them with one voice. We hope you will visit www.CTCOLT.org to see updated events and join us in more student and teacher activities this year so that we can better advocate with a strong, united voice. Wishing you a wonderful holiday season. Best regards, Lea Graner Kennedy.
In Memoriam

Marilyn Horton
President of CT COLT
1998-2000

Marilyn Jean (Martinelli) Horton, wife of James Horton, went home to be with the Lord on October 22, 2019. Marilyn embraced life and welcomed everyone. Her life with Jim was a constant adventure, including travels to Europe and throughout the United States. She was most proud of her roles as loving wife and mother, and devoted Nonna to her grandchildren. She was an inspiration to her two sisters and loyal friend to all who knew her. She had an undeniably spirit. As an educator and community leader she touched many lives. As a proud graduate of St. Joseph College (Class of '68), Marilyn devoted her life to education. Marilyn served as principal at East Hampton High School and as an assistant principal at Enfield High School and Coginchaug Regional High School. She taught world languages in grades K-12 in Madison and Marlborough. In addition, she was President of the Connecticut Council of Language Teachers. As a community leader, she was an elected member of the Madison Board of Education, President of Giants Neck Beach Association Board of Governors and AHM Youth Services. Born in Waterbury, Marilyn was the daughter of the late Bartholomew and Mary (Palo) Martinelli. In addition to her soulmate Jim, those who cherish her memory include her daughter Helen Horton and husband Pat Petrone, grandchildren Arianna and Dillon, sisters Barbara Houle and Rita DiMaria, many nieces and nephews, and other family members. A Mass of Christian burial was held on Monday, Oct. 28th at 11 a.m. at The Church of the Holy Family, 185 Church Street, Amston, CT. Burial took place immediately following the Mass at St. Peter’s Cemetery. Calling hours were Sunday, Oct. 27th from 3 to 6 p.m. at Swan Funeral Home, 1224 Boston Post Rd., Old Saybrook, CT. In lieu of flowers, please make a donation in Marilyn’s memory to a charity of your choice.

Teacher Spotlight

Connecticut’s Jessica Haxhi Elected President-Elect of ACTFL

The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) is pleased to announce that Jessica Haxhi is the newly elected President-Elect. Her term on the board will begin on January 1, 2020.

Jessica Haxhi – After more than 20 years as a language educator, Jessica Haxhi now serves as Supervisor of World Languages for New Haven Public Schools in New Haven, CT, where she’s been since 2013. There, she focuses on standards-based curriculum development, teacher collaboration within and across languages, and professional learning around engaging, proficiency-based instruction. Most recently, Haxhi worked with CT COLT to advocate for Seal of Biliteracy legislation and served on the NCSSFL-ACTFL Can-Do Statements Revision Committee. She is currently on ACTFL’s Professional Learning Committee. Jessica will serve as ACTFL President in 2021.

Meiching Chang, CT COLT’s Language Teacher of the Year for 2019-2020

By Rebecca Aubrey (South Windsor Public Schools) with collaboration from Matthew Mangino (Wethersfield Public Schools)

Meiching Chang is proud to recognize Meiching Chang as CT COLT’s 2019-2020 Language Teacher of the Year. Meiching teaches Mandarin in Glastonbury Public Schools. Meiching understands the importance of being multilingual and tries to share the gift of languages with students in Glastonbury. In fact, she speaks Taiwanese—the language of her homeland— in addition to Mandarin and English. Her language journey started in Taiwan, where she earned her undergraduate degree in English.
Meiching describes the importance of learning languages for her students as helping them to develop multiple perspectives. We do this so that we can “create a truly multifaceted perspective in which we can examine and discuss world issues from both the ‘outsider’ and the ‘inside’ perspective.” This helps to make our students better world citizens.

On the important topic of error correction in language learning, Meiching says that it’s important to “convey to students the organic state of ‘perfect imperfection that we all exist in as language learners.” She said that, “even after 35 years, I still make mistakes and my students know they can correct me, just as I correct them.” Making mistakes is a good thing - it shows that we are learning and understanding our own first language better. “This is actually the perfect core of our language practice” according to Meiching.

The letters of support bestowed glowing praise for the work that Meiching Chang does in Glastonbury. Rita Oleksak, the district’s Director of Foreign Languages and ELL, said “Meiching has done much to build intercultural competence in the Chinese language programs. Her efforts to bring awareness and knowledge about the Chinese language and culture, not only for her students, but also for her colleagues and the district as a whole, have been noteworthy.”

In the words of CT COLT President, Lea Graner-Kennedy: “But, it was through class observations I did during the spring and again at the summer STARTALK program, that I was able to witness firsthand, the passion, joy and commitment that Meiching brings to our profession.”

The Connecticut Council of Language Teachers Teacher of the Year program was established to elevate the status and public profile of language learning in our state. The Teacher of the Year Committee seeks to select a candidate who demonstrates high leverage teaching practices, enthusiasm for language learning, and the potential for serving as an influential advocate for languages. If you know an outstanding language teacher who would be a good spokesperson for languages in Connecticut, please consider nominating him or her for consideration as the 2020-2021 language teacher of the year. A call for nominations will come out in the spring, and more information is available on www.ctcolt.org.
clubs, organized and held school-wide cultural activities, led teacher workshops, and the list goes on. But the thought of stepping out of my comfort zone to do something district-wide or state-wide causes me a certain amount of anxiety and cognitive dissonance. My gut tells me this is a job for the highly credentialed experts, not a simple Chinese teacher such as myself.

Being CT COLT’s teacher of the year allowed me to sit on their board meetings. I was able to see first-hand how the board members make all the events which they sponsor happen so successfully. These board members are supervisors and teachers – just like my supervisors and co-workers, just like me. During the school day, they do the same job that you and I do. However, on their own time, they manage to meet regularly to plan the future of foreign language teaching in CT. They work tirelessly behind the scenes on community outreach, fostering the education and awareness of legislators on the importance of promoting second language learning, and executing all the logistics necessary to hold the activities and events that will help fulfill this plan.

I also began to see the real selflessness behind this effort. Not only do the members of this organization donate countless hours of time and effort to this cause, but they do it for second language learning as a whole – not the specific world languages that they may teach or represent. This makes all of us a team in working together to create a second-language-friendly world.

Therefore, I decided that this year I will change my focus from the promotion of Chinese to promoting all world language activities. I want to show my students that all languages are important and all languages influence each other and are connected. I will also participate in more language activities and competitions in my district and out of my district to give my students a chance to interact more with other students and other world languages. My students will be encouraged to put their language ability to use in the real world and to serve the community, to be teachers of Chinese language and culture to those who are studying other languages, but also to be students who are willing to learn about and benefit from other world languages in a multitude of contexts, not just in a classroom with a grade or a course credit being the end product. Finally, I will also work on educating students and parents about the intergenerational benefits that accrue from learning a second language and how important it is that we support and build upon this vital work.

This is my plan in promoting second language learning. In the end, I think the biggest thing I learned from this experience is that the people who are guiding our field are not some mysterious group of experts with arcane credentials, they are teachers just like you and me. I think the difference is that they have collectively accepted that we should not be divided into leaders and followers or promoters of one world language or another. At our best, we are all leaders, united in our belief that learning about other language and cultures brings all people together while simultaneously diversifying our perspective and worldview. Therefore, I don’t think I can go back to being just a follower of the experts and a promoter of Chinese. I’m ready to take my place as a co-leader and promoter of the unified plurality that is second language learning. That is my ultimate answer to a simple interview question that led me on a complicated journey. But what about you? What would you do to promote second language learning?
Including Parents on the Path

Joseph A. Parodi-Brown, Ed.D.
Chair, Modern Languages Department
Marianapolis Preparatory School

In October, we had our annual parent-teacher conferences. While the days are long, there are many reasons that I value the four days we dedicate to this opportunity to speak directly with our partners in education: our students’ parents and guardians. First, there is the inevitable moment when parents walk in for a conference and the truth of the old adage about apples falling from trees becomes perfectly clear. Second, is the chance to assure the parents that I know and care about their child, that I recognize the strengths and opportunities for development in each student, and that I truly do value my collaborative relationship with them, the parents. There is so much important relationship building that can occur in a
parent-teacher conference and there is so much value in the opportunity to reflect on my relationship with each of my students.

However, the most important reason that I treasure parent-teacher conferences is that it offers me a chance to highlight the great work that our language profession does each day. Consider the conversations you have had with adults about your profession – whether in a parent-teacher conference as I am describing or in a social situation. Many of the parents who come in to meet with me blurt out almost immediately, as if it is some horrific confession, that they never studied a language or that they did but no longer remember any of it. When speaking with parents about this, an important idea that I have realized is the implications of those statements. A parent who never studied a language or who has not retained language abilities often does not consider language study as valuable as the study of math or science or of other humanities, like history and English. When I had that realization, it changed the way I approached parent-teacher conferences. I had to educate the parents about how my language class operates to offer context for them, demonstrating what a language classroom can look like for those who had never set foot in one and offering insight into an alternative to the language learning environment they had experienced.

I realized that it was necessary to explain to parents what language proficiency means and how teaching toward proficiency shapes my classroom – their students’ classroom – before I could speak with the parents about how their child was performing in class. Now my conferences begin with me asking the parents what they have heard about my class, which allows me to gauge how well my students understand what proficiency means, how it is measured, and what we are doing to build it. As can be imagined, I generally have to add information for the parents, because we all know how the telephone game works from parent to student to teacher. Here’s the thing: When I talk to the parents about why I focus on proficiency, about what the proficiency target for the course is, and about what that proficiency level looks like, they become, without exception, excited about their child’s language course. I hear comments about how they wish they could have learned like that, how they wish they could take the course, and how language proficiency is such a powerful tool in our world. Suddenly a course that they and their students often had considered less important than other courses has relevance, has power, and has reason.

Talking explicitly with parents about why we teach for proficiency can be so powerful on its own merits, but then I hit them with the pièce de résistance. I talk to them about the CT Seal of Biliteracy and how we set Intermediate Mid as our proficiency goal for all students leaving our program. I do not think that my school is unique in that many students and parents are highly motivated by creating a competitive portfolio for college applications. Sharing the Seal of Biliteracy as something that will truly make their students stand apart encourages parental buy-in to the language program in ways that I alone could never do. The Seal is tangible, it goes on their student’s transcripts, and it validates their child’s decision to take a fourth year of a language instead of three science classes at a time.

My parent-teacher conferences have helped me remember that partnering with the parents, reminding them (as well as their children) why languages are important, and being transparent and explicit with them about what their children will be learning and why engenders a relationship of cooperation. It is in the best interest of the students and of my program. And, it is easy to get the parents on board with language instruction that is research-based, assessable, and, relevant. How can you partner with parents to ensure the long-term success of your students and of your program?

**Mistakes Welcome Here**

Luz Gisela Pérez
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Life led me on the path of learning a second language and a new culture. I arrived in Massachusetts at the age of 17 for my last year of high school. I didn’t know English and the process of learning a second language was extremely difficult and full of obstacles that I eventually learned to overcome.

At first, my first impulse was to reject the call to a new culture with a new language since that call to a new adventure in my teenage mind represented fear. Even so, I still had to face the challenge since at the time I wasn’t in charge of making my own decisions and hence was driven into a life for which I was not prepared.

The challenge had begun and one of the biggest obstacles was the language. I could not communicate in English and being a talker, I suffered from not being able to communicate with others, not being able to make friends or simply not being able to exceed in other disciplines. Each obstacle represented a development opportunity and every time a new challenge was
overcome my knowledge grew and my own self esteem improved. Once, when I was in the rehearsal of the 12th grade graduation I remember wanting to speak and saying “I’m boring” instead of “I’m bored”. Many students in my class started to laugh and I although I was very embarrassed I quickly understood that I had learned from a mistake and at that moment I decided to start making mistakes whenever possible because I knew it would help me become a bilingual individual.

It is important that our students understand that mistakes must be made when learning a second language and that although it is very embarrassing it is also a perfect opportunity to learn, improve and never forget new knowledge. So, how do we convince our students that making mistakes is important when learning a new language?

First, we convince them by explaining the importance of making mistakes and how it helps the brain.

Second, we teach that together as a class the mistakes will be used to learn from each other and help create an environment where students feel confident about making mistakes.

Finally, we model the correct language when correcting errors and give students the opportunity to correctly use the information learned. Mistakes are simply part of everything in life and because they help us see what not to do we also learn what to do.

Personal Perspectives

Reflections from the Trail of the ACTFL National Language Teacher of the Year

By Rebecca Aubrey

The last year has been an incredible journey for me. I have travelled to ten states and this ACTFL 2019 in Washington DC marked my 14th conference in 12 months. This includes a rough estimate of 14,000 miles by air, train, and car. As my hotel rooms and parking spots began to blend together, I learned to take a picture of what number room I had and where I had left my car. When I was named Teacher of the Year, a former Teacher of the Year said “You better get a good suitcase”. I actually thought the suitcase I had was fine, until a wheel fell off and I had to drag it awkwardly the rest of the way through the airport in New Orleans.

In February, I narrowly escaped a major snowstorm in Connecticut and participated in the JNCL-NCLIS Language Advocacy Day in Washington DC. Language teachers from across the country met with congressional representatives to advocate for legislation that will increase funding for language learning in the U.S. Our primary lobbying points were based on the role of languages in improving our nation’s global economic competitiveness, defense, and diplomacy. While this may be what resonates with legislators, we also need to do more to develop a citizenry that is culturally competent and able to respectfully interact in globalized communities. Currently, only 15-20% of people in the U.S. speak more than one language, compared to 56% of Europeans. Travelling as the national language teacher of the year has made me hyper-focused on the languages around me, and how woefully behind we are in the U.S.

On my flight leaving ACTFL 2018 in New Orleans, I eavesdropped on a conversation between two strangers who were negotiating their seats in English. In town for the same neurobiology conference, they soon realized they were both from Spain, and the conversation slipped from English to Spanish. As a further coincidence, they both worked in Budapest, and shared their struggles with learning to speak enough Hungarian to get by. When I arrived in Cleveland, OH for the Central States Annual Conference, I caught a ride from a Haitian Uber driver. After I exchanged my limited Haitian Creole with him, basically “I’m sorry, I don’t speak Creole”, he went into a long discourse about the relationship between the U.S. and Haiti. While attending the NNELL Summer Institute in Chicago, my Indian Uber driver spoke four languages. He also volunteered that he did not learn any English through the grammar-focused lessons in school, but instead through real-world interactions. My Lyft driver when I arrived in Washington, DC for ACTFL 2019 was from Morocco. His native languages were French and Arabic, but he also spoke English fluently, and knew a bit of Spanish. In contrast to these stories of multilingual immigrants, a worker in my hotel in Fort Worth Texas, who, after asking me what I was in town for, lamented that she had never learned another language. She said that being monolingual meant that fewer jobs were available to her and she earned 20% less than those who could speak another language.

In February and March I travelled to each of the four regional language conferences: NECTFL, Central States, SWCOLT, and
SCOLT. At these conferences, I had the opportunity to attend meetings with delegates from each of the states in the region. Overwhelmingly, states all across the country identified access to quality professional development, a lack of qualified language teachers, and new teacher support and retention as major hurdles to overcome. Thirty-eight states, including Connecticut, have now passed a Seal of Biliteracy, yet many states still struggle with providing access to all students and ensuring that the criteria for earning a Seal continue to be rigorous. Many times, these conversations felt like the hurdles we face in developing a more multilingual and globally competent citizenry are insurmountable.

As I travelled those 14,000 miles though, something else really struck me. Everywhere, there are countless educators playing countless roles in improving our practice and advocating for language learning and intercultural competencies. At each state, regional, and national conference, thousands of teachers spend hours preparing sessions, and thousands more come to listen and learn on their Saturdays. Teachers sit on language association boards at the local and national level, taking time away from their families and personal lives in order to discuss policies, professional development, and advocacy for language learning. They spend hours planning every last detail to organizing a conference, down to the menu, keeping it cost effective for attendees, and ensuring the best possible learning experiences. Through the advocacy teachers do for the Seal of Biliteracy, not only is language learning becoming more valued, but heritage speakers no longer need to obliterate their first language and are instead are recognized for it. Language teachers across the country write journal articles, magazine articles, blogs, and social media posts. They mentor new teachers, write curriculum, and guide language programs. Language teachers spend countless hours, beyond what they do in the classroom, to promote language learning and developing cultural competencies in the U.S.

After travelling the country over the last year, I am moved beyond words, with the sheer human capital that is going into promoting language learning in the United States. We all have a role to play - for some of us it is taking the public stage, but there is also so much more that goes on behind the curtains. I am deeply grateful for all that the countless language educators do to ensure that our students are prepared for a 21st century, global, multilingual world. I am going to keep my now not-so-new suitcase ready for what comes next, and I invite you to get involved as well!

Making the Most of One Day at ACTFL 2019: My Top 5 Takeaways

Jill Griswold, Glastonbury Public Schools
@srtagriswold23

A quick 36 hour trip to Washington D.C. was worth it to catch some of ACTFL 2019. Themes of intercultural competence, social justice and proficiency-based learning were evident throughout the sessions I attended while there for the day:

Developing a learner-centered environment:

I started my day with Greta Lundgaard (@gretafromtexas) who walked us through four main ideas that she believes make up the heart of instruction. One of the points she focused on was the importance of providing consistent, positive feedback to our students so that we foster the confidence in them that is imperative for them to succeed. She reinforced that as teachers we need to adapt a “you CAN do it” mentality and understand that on assessments or other checks for learning, they may not be able to do something YET, but they WILL be able to in the future!

“Don’t be basic!”

I really enjoyed the presentation from Erin Carlson (@ErinRae0399) and Stephanie Madison Schenck (@SraStephanie) from South Carolina who shared a technique they created to increase complexity in novice level writing. They shared with us three separate two-part sentence frameworks that they teach their students to increase elaboration. Examples of the sentence frameworks in English are as follows:

1. Affirmative/negative: “I am tall, but I am not athletic.” This framework requires students to use a greater variety of related vocabulary.
2. Myself/someone else: “I am tall and skinny, but Antonio is short and muscular.” This framework requires students to show a greater command of different verb forms.
3. Answer/add *related* information: “I used to eat junk food when I was little, but now I eat healthy food.” This framework requires students to show a relationship between two separate, but related ideas.

They found that even when students were asked to answer simple, novice level questions, students wrote more and incorporated more vocabulary after practicing with these frameworks.
Creating Learning Progressions to Build Proficiency:

I was excited to attend a session with Paul Sandrock (@psandrock) and Donna Clemente who walked us through the guiding principles of Backward Design. Paul Sandrock reminded us that the purpose of a summative assessment is not to give the teacher evidence that the students remembered everything we taught them in a unit, but rather, to see what they can do with the language at the end of a unit. During this session, the presenters encouraged us to think about the process of creating our unit goals and can-do statements, and subsequently, the toolbox with the supporting functions, structures, patterns, vocabulary, etc. that students will need to communicate the content of the unit. He reminded us that when students need phrases such as “I went” and “I ate” that they do not necessarily need an hour-long discussion on the preterite tense because their developing systems cannot handle it. Just because they need certain language to communicate the content in that unit does not mean that you need to teach them every single part of that particular grammatical concept.

Using Authentic Resources to Develop Intercultural Competence and Social Justice:

One session I attended with Dorie Perugini (@doriecp), Stacey Johnson (@staceymargarita), and Linwood Randolph (@ProfeRandolph) challenged us to ask deeper questions about the authentic resources we are using in our classes. They advised that we think critically about if the texts and other resources we use accurately represent the target culture and if not, that we discuss with our students what stereotypes are portrayed in them. Moreover, they discussed moving from surface-level reflections to facilitating more thorough-processing of the texts we use. During this session, I was reminded that asking comprehension questions in English about a resource does not necessarily mean that students have fully processed a text or have learned something meaningful about the target culture.

From Planning for Learning to Evidence of Learning:

I ended my day at ACTFL with a presentation from Laura Terrill (@lterrillindy) about the importance of checking for learning daily in our lessons. She stated that lesson planning is both an art and a science: Creatively hooking the students into the culture at the beginning of the lesson is an art, but when structuring our lessons we must keep brain research in the forefront of our minds—remembering how long students can attend to a task, making sure we activate prior knowledge in our hook at the beginning of the lesson, providing plenty of input before guided or shared practice, and giving them an opportunity at the end of the lesson to apply what they have learned. She declared that this check for understanding is KEY, and that without it, it’s similar to “serving a hamburger without the bottom bun!” She reminded us that making sure we have a daily check for understanding does not mean more to correct/grade; exit slips or whatever you may use at the end of a lesson to check for learning will inform your future instruction and let you know which students may be falling behind. With this mentality, the teacher is way more intentional and can think of themselves more like “assessors” rather than just “activity designers.”

For more snapshots and highlights from ACTFL, search the hashtag #ACTFL19 on Twitter or go to www.actfl.org.

Valuable Immersive Exposure to the Arab Influence on Spanish Culture

By Susan Bennitt, Modern Language Faculty at Hopkins School, New Haven
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If I could have a historical figure for dinner one night, I would choose Isabel the Catholic, to pick her brain on how she was persuaded to expel the non-converse Jews and Muslims from Spain in 1492. That said, I leapt at the opportunity to travel to Morocco and Spain with the Arab Influence on Spain trip organized by Commissioner Betty Sternberg. We would immerse ourselves in the Arab world south of Andalusia, follow the path the Moriscos took to Iberia which they called home for nearly 800 years before their expulsion mandated by the Inquisition, and appreciate the influence left behind on Spanish culture. I just might find new insight on how she agreed to the plan.

The foundation for the acquisition of cultural competency, gaining an understanding for what makes other people tick,
what shapes their sense of aesthetics or the way they relate to one another, comes with gaining empathy by immersing yourself in their lives, their homes, their places of worship, of work or play, in their cities or even in the emptiness of their countryside. The design of our trip checked all of these boxes remarkably well.

Eight educators from Connecticut set off together on this adventure. A well-balanced combination of administrators and teachers, we landed in Casablanca ready to get a taste of Morocco. Before anything else happened, in fact, we were treated to our first tagine, a stew prepared and served in a conical ceramic pot. Racking our brains to discern the spices, we came up with cardamom, cinnamon, cumin, ginger, and fennel, but surely missed many of the secret ingredients to this tantalizing dish.

We called Fes home for the next days, where we stayed in a charming Riad and had the opportunity to get to know the family who ran it. Samia was doing graduate work in English Philology, she was curious to get to know us and open to conversation about women’s rights and social justice in Morocco. We had long conversations with her after our homemade meals there, and became fast friends. I continue to write back and forth with her and I love that this trip helped me make a good friend in Morocco, where local women are not usually able to strike out on their own.

In Fes, we also visited fascinating artisans at a weavers’ co-op and a tannery, among others. I found the weavers the most fascinating as I learned how vegan silk is made from agave fibers and dyed with indigo, a plant, yet not cochineal which is an insect, and subsequently saw the threads being spun all over the back allies of the Medina.

From Fes, we ventured to the Roman ruins of Volubilis, where looking out over the plains, one really got a feel for the Roman expansion across the Maghreb, and the eventual convergence of Arab cultures that crossed the Mediterranean to conquer Iberia in the early VIIIth century.

En route to Andalusia, our next stop was Chefchaouen, Morocco’s blue city. This was the highlight of the trip for me, as I was mesmerized by the colors and the diversity of the people we met there. Located on a hill, most of the buildings are painted a lovely hydrangea blue, which takes on different hues if in the sunlight or the shadows. An ice-cold river flowed through town, and a café was set on the riverbed so the water could flow over your tired feet. Oranges and watermelons floated in nearby pools and were quickly blended into refreshing juices at the bar. In town, I sat with a shopkeeper the better part of the afternoon, who talked to me in French about his family and how they had fled from Spain in the 1400s. He assured me that his family had lived in Granada until the end of the XVth century and that amongst each other, they still spoke some words of Spanish at home, but he was more comfortable using French with me.

Once we crossed into Spain from Tangiers, we headed to Granada, where Isabel made the decision I first referred to. I stood before her tomb in the depths of the cathedral and wished even harder that she would tell me in her own words how the coexistence of cultures in Iberia was perceived as a threat, now that I had seen for myself such amazing displays of art, engineering, mathematics and medicine in Morocco.

We took an extensive tour through the Alhambra, the palace the last Sultan, Boabdil, fled from, and meandered all morning with the dozens of waterways that flow through it and its fountains and gardens. The Alhambra may be one of the most spectacular palaces you’ll ever see. Yet, another mind-bending monument we got to visit was the Cathedral of Córdoba. Its marble horseshoe columns and tessellations attest to the mastery of the artisans who did convert to Catholicism and remained in Spain, although the alterations to the original
mosque began well before the XVth century while Spain was in the process of being “reconqusted” from its Muslim caliphates.

A round table discussion with professors from the social sciences college at the university was a great way to finish up our many activities during the trip. Historians and social anthropologists presented an overview of the Moorish influence on Spain, and we had the opportunity to probe and discuss the issue in depth. It was great to meet Spanish colleagues and ask many of the questions that had been percolating for days.

The people we met on our trip were unique, as were many “off the beaten path”, hands on opportunities it gave us to be part of the cultures we were visiting. Since last summer I’ve often recalled the diverse sites that we saw, and their value as indelible marks left by the migrations and presence of the Romans, Moroccan tribes, and Spanish Catholics and Jews who converged in the area so many hundreds of years ago. I’ve written several lessons on what I learned and have been mindful to emphasize inclusion in my classroom and school, as a way of life. Both Betty and I would be happy to chat with anyone interested in pursuing immersion travel opportunities, such as this one. Please feel free to be in touch.

What Portion can you use in Your Class Tomorrow?

By Sarab Al Ani, teacher of Arabic for 10+ years
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The title of this piece of writing is a question that we hear often when attending CT COLT conference. 2019 is not the first year in which I both present and attend the CT COLT conference. Every year I decide to come again, and every year I do. I am not going to talk a lot about what a great opportunity the conference offers in terms of networking with fellow language educators (especially for us educators of the less commonly taught languages), nor about the language teaching resources that we get to examine. Rather, I will stick to that one question that we hear bouncing around in presentation rooms and spaces; what aspect of this presentation might you be able to use the very next day? In doing so, I would like to extend my thanks to John Conner from Groton School who in an extremely enthusiastic (at times entertaining) presentation walked us through his idea of the ideal lesson plan that aims at helping students reach total fluency.

Before I give you my answer to the question, allow me to paint a picture of what the presentation space was like. Vivacious music welcome the attendees as they walk in. Spanish lyrics and upbeat tunes forcing everyone to smile and groove. The fairly sizable room filled up quickly, and early leaving attendees to sit on the floor and between aisles. Looking around, I remember thinking; I guess I am not the only one who aspires for that ideal setting! Yet, this ideal setting – I confess- was not my only aspiration. I wanted to see how this version of lesson plan (or lesson planning) compares to the one I had in mind particularly after having myself written a blog post on the benefits of effective lesson planning just a couple of months earlier (Link here. Article is written in Arabic). I hope you can see now why I was starting to ponder that I am in the right place and I will undoubtedly reach my gain.

Mr. Conner proceeded to go through what he called steps of the lesson plan starting from the warm up to using literature to open group discussions. In more than one spot, he played video recordings of his students during class time as the lesson plan unfolds. The snippets, though not at all lengthy, were successful in portraying what this part or that aspect would
look like once implemented. After playing the videos, Mr. Conner did not neglect to comment on organizational aspects, advantages, and at times challenges of the piece in hand. He also often supported his arguments with research findings. Attendees interrupted him now and then when they felt the need to seek clarifications or reasoning. His views in more than one aspect matched mine and thus I was content. In aspects where his visions and mine diverged, the differences were neither huge nor fundamental. Perhaps more important that all of that; I was able to find an aspect that I can use in my class room the very next day and indeed I did.

To begin his lesson and as a warm up, Mr. Conner recommended hitting the ground running and commencing lesson proceedings with an activity dedicated to sharpening interpersonal communication skill. Every day, he explained, he prepares a set of seven questions (always seven; not more and not less). The questions are related to the theme the students were studying, activating vocabulary or grammar aspects within that theme. He would type them, print them out and put them on students’ desks. His students knew that once they enter class they were going to work on these questions with a partner (more often than not the person they sit next to. Though occasionally Mr. Conner would assign different partners to mix things up a little). The interpersonal communication skill continues for a few minutes followed by a wrap up. He did not neglect to mention that studies have shown that the total amount of speaking time per week per students in a world language class was a meager amount of something like one minute and a few seconds. This, he found appalling.

I (like a great number of language educators, I am sure) also use an activity that is very much similar to the one Mr. Conner described. The difference is that there were not always seven questions, I did not do it every day nor did I have the lesson start with it so promptly. I would wait for everyone to walk into class first, take attendance (electronically using Canvas) and then proceed to start with the questions. Hearing Mr. Conner describe the way he conducted his activity and viewing the footage he had made me realize that I was wasting anywhere from 3 to 5 minutes of students’ valuable time that could otherwise be used in speaking (some students walk to class earlier than other depending on where they were on campus right before class)! Tuesday after the CT COLT conference (which was on a Monday) I applied the activity exactly the way Mr. Conner described it and I informed my students that this is how we were going to begin class every day. It has now been a week since I started the new format of the activity and I can see that students are involved, eager and excited as they engage in their daily interpersonal communicative skill.

Thank you, Mr. Conner and thank you CT COLT conference for providing me yet another time with an activity that I was able to implement in my class the very next day, to help my students improve and my teaching tools increase.

Methods, Resources

"Pachas en Perú” YouTube Channel: Teaching About Peru With 100+ Videos

By Beth Pachas, M.A.
Joel Barlow High School (Region 9)
Member of CT COLT, NECTFL, ACTFL, and AATSP
Twitter: @ProfePachas
YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/c/pachasenperu

“Pachas en Perú” is a free Youtube Channel with over 100 videos dedicated to providing Spanish teachers with comprehensible content that’s both linguistically and culturally rich. The videos, which range from 10 seconds to 15 minutes, allow users to explore Peruvian language and culture. Topics include daily routines, families, professions, favorite foods, culture shock, and more. During my sixteen years of teaching Spanish, I have spent countless hours searching for comprehensible listening materials for my students. If I were to add up all the time spent looking for videos, it would exceed the screen time limits that parents put on their children’s devices! The new ‘Pachas en Perú’ YouTube channel is a time-saving resource that Spanish teachers can integrate into most curricula.

Before the summer of 2018, I learned about the national ‘Fund for Teachers’ organization that awards travel grants to public school teachers, and the State-level Dalio Foundation that participates in this program. I eagerly applied for funding with
the purpose of fulfilling my long-standing need for comprehensible and culturally rich videos for my students. During the application process, I asked my classes what they would like to know about Peruvian life, and my students’ questions, such as “What’s a typical Peruvian snack - do they eat Pop Tarts?” and “What’s their school day like?”, ended up forming the basis of my interviews. I also contacted Orlando Kelm, director of “Spanish Proficiency Exercises” at the University of Texas, to ask permission to use his website as a model. He agreed, and offered helpful tips which improved the interviews and the final edits.

While conducting my interviews in a foreign country, I had to step out of my comfort zone and talk to strangers, testing my intercultural competence in Spanish by carefully choosing my words with subjects on the streets and in offices, with book vendors and with store owners, with women in a weaving community who spoke Spanish as a second language, with my private tour guide, Katy, and two internationally well-known musicians - Miguel Ballumbrosio and Damaris. Nerves withstanding, throughout the process it was exciting to know that I was answering my students’ questions; that five weeks in Perú would provide me time to serve my students, fellow Spanish teachers, and their students who would eventually learn from these videos. I was grateful to meet so many willing participants, who were eager to share about their country and their daily lives.

While these videos have a wide range of topics and difficulty, they are most appealing and formatted for middle, high, and university classrooms. They reflect Peru’s cultural diversity with Afro-Peruvian, Indigenous, and Asian communities represented among the more than twenty-five participants in the video interviews.

In creating ‘Pachas en Perú’, I was pleasantly surprised by how much I learned about the products, practices, and perspectives of the Peruvian people. For example, that people view mountains, or ‘Apu’ in Quechua, as sacred and living beings that protect the home from natural disasters and provide for the community. Or, the norm that women in the indigenous communities cut their hair only three times during their lifetime! As a language teacher, enticing students with these realities is so empowering during the language learning process, and one of the factors that leads to students being lifelong learners of the language.

As a member of CT COLT and NECTFL, I was eligible to apply for the MEAD scholarship and was fortunate to be one of two recipients in the Northeast United States. The advantage of being a MEAD fellow consists of being paired with a mentor who would assist in the advancement of a project that contributes to my field. My mentor, the tech-savvy Dana Pilla of Rutgers University, has helped me set this project in the right direction. Since February of 2019, I have been heeding her advice and have edited more videos and promoted them on multiple social media platforms. I worked on branding, and had a custom logo designed in order to create a more professional look. Within just a few months of formally launching the YouTube channel, well over 300 Spanish teachers have subscribed, and have continued to express positive feedback. In reading their comments, it is apparent that there is a great need for these cultural videos and I am so pleased to provide them. The next step is to create more EdPuzzles, transcriptions, and supporting materials for the videos already on the site, and to add even more - so stay tuned!

Thank you again to Fund for Teachers and the Dalio Foundation, Orlando Kelm, CT-COLT, NECTFL, and Dana Pilla for this special opportunity to contribute to the advancement of language teaching, and to grow as a professional. If you are attending the NECTFL conference this February, please come to see my presentation - I would love to meet you!

Making Authentic Literary Texts Relevant, Meaningful, and Fun in Advanced Beginner and Intermediate Spanish-language Classrooms

By Laura Graebner Shepin
Rolling Meadows High School

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Introduction

The incorporation of literary texts in advanced beginner and intermediate level language classrooms (high school Spanish, years 2–4; university Spanish, semesters 2–4) can seem intimidating. Teachers worry about students’ ability to understand texts linguistically and to interpret them culturally. Additionally, the thoughtful exploration of literary texts takes time away from other content, specifically grammar and vocabulary, which often seem more straightforward to teach due to the plethora of instructional and assessment tools already available. Lastly, the accessibility of the literary texts found in some text books, and the lack of complete instructional materials for instructors to teach these texts, might discourage instructors from including literary texts in course curriculum.
Despite these challenges, it is important to include literary texts at the advanced beginner and intermediate levels for three reasons. First, literary texts present grammar points and vocabulary in context, which actively supports language acquisition, for example, by highlighting the uses of the preterite and the imperfect. Second, literature is the verbal representation of the target culture; literary texts communicate emotions, perceptions, and human experiences in a way a verb chart cannot. A compelling case for the role of literature in the development of world citizens is made by the philosopher Martha C. Nussbaum, who argues that literature simulates a reader’s “narrative imagination,” which in turn allows the reader to feel empathy for others. Third, successful engagement with literary texts in the advanced beginner and intermediate stages of language study sets students up for continued success in Advanced Placement (AP) courses and upper-division university language coursework.

ACTFL’s “Guiding Principles for Language Learning” explicitly promote the benefits of literature in the foreign language curriculum. Gillian Lazar argues that authentic literature exposes students to “complex themes and fresh, unexpected uses of language” and is “more absorbing than the pseudo-narratives frequently found in course books” (15). Similarly, Jonathan P. A. Sell encourages L2 teachers to reject fiction authored specifically for the language learner in favor of authentic literary texts, citing its representation of language and culture to be more genuine, and ultimately, more beneficial and interesting to the learner. A well-chosen literary text “can be an effective tool for stimulating and achieving language learning and equipping learners with relevant linguistic and socio-cultural competence” (91–92). In addition to the linguistic authenticity of literature, its emotional authenticity is motivating to the reader and demands a “personal response” (Kousompou 75).

In considering specifically how to approach teaching literary texts, Sanju Choudhary describes two approaches for L2 literary analysis. The first of these, reader-response, “demystifies” literature by encouraging readers to make personal connections. The second is a language-based approach, which focuses language instruction and production related to the literature. Both strategies, he concludes, have value. Lazar’s *Literature and Language Teaching: A Guide for Teachers and Trainers* provides many resources to guide teachers through the selection of texts and activities to support language acquisition, comprehension, and oral fluency in L2 learners, including those at the lower levels. Janet Swaffar and Katherine Arens’s chapters 3 and 4 are also particularly useful resources for the selection and instruction of literature at the lower levels.

Selecting and teaching a literary text successfully requires, like all good teaching, thoughtful and intentional lesson design. Teachers need to ask the following questions to understand the challenges the text presents to students and to identify the goals the teacher has for student learning:

1. Is the text thematically appropriate? The text must be relevant and accessible to the audience; relatable themes will lead to student success, whereas abstract, philosophical, or overly mature themes will tend to frustrate them. Sometimes the most canonical literary works are not the best fit for advanced beginner and intermediate students.

2. What vocabulary and grammar will students need to know to understand the text? What words and language structures do students already confidently know? What vocabulary and grammar can they be expected to decode on their own using reading strategies such as context clues and cognates? What vocabulary and grammar will need to be glossed? (There is no magic number of how many footnotes is too many, but each word students seek in the footnotes disrupts their reading and is a reminder to them of how much they do not understand.)

3. How sophisticated are the literary devices used in the work? Advanced beginner and intermediate students will likely be able to identify certain devices such as metaphors, similes, repetition, and alliteration. Complex imagery, however, should be avoided.

4. What will students need to know about the culture, the author, or the work itself before reading the text? Advanced beginner and intermediate students likely have limited knowledge of Hispanic cultures and the literary context of the work.

5. How much time do I have? Pacing is a serious consideration. Too often, literature is squeezed into the curriculum. Without time to engage in meaningful activities before, during, and after reading, teachers and students often feel rushed and frustrated. At times, it is prudent to edit literary works for length (but never for language). In doing so, students can focus on one particular part of the text, for example a descriptive paragraph or a dialog between two characters.

6. What do I want students to understand about the work? What patterns or relationships (in language use, theme, or narrative or poetic structure) do I want students to identify? What comparisons do I want them to make? How will this text encourage and inspire my students?
The answers to these questions should direct the creation of activities for before, during, and after reading. While each teacher, classroom, and text require different support, the following activities provide a menu of choices that can be customized as needed.

**Pre-reading Activities**

Pre-reading activities are critical to setting students up for a positive experience with the target language and the culture.

The pre-teaching of vocabulary and grammar prior to engaging students directly with a literary text is essential, but the selection of the right activity will depend on whether students will be recognizing information from prior instruction, intuitively decoding the information, or learning it for the first time. If students already recognize the vocabulary and grammar (but might be rusty), a warm-up, such as a crossword puzzle or online flashcards, may help students reactivate what they know. If students will be expected to decode, be sure to review reading strategies such as seeking cognates, identifying familiar stems, and using context clues such as time tags, tone, and theme to derive meaning. Students should only see a limited number of new words or grammar structures; if too much pre-teaching is required, students will be bored and disheartened before they even interact with the text.

While it may be important to pre-teach the cultural and author contexts, as above, this should be limited in scope and length; any biographical and cultural pre-activity should be targeted and essential to understanding the text. Oftentimes, this information is not needed. However, when it is useful to the readers to have some additional background, consider using an image or series of images to spark students’ understanding, for example, instead of reading about historical violence in Colombia, use a few images by the artist Fernando Botero as a conversation prompt.

It is also beneficial to foreshadow the theme of the text. Frequently it is possible to leverage the students’ own feelings, experiences, and general knowledge. For example, by answering questions like, “How would you feel if . . . “ or “Would you be afraid to . . . “, students move mentally into the literary space of the text prior to starting to read. In some cases, students can interpret or react to an image instead of a question with the same effect.

Pre-teaching imagery can be more complicated but is also important. Oftentimes, students have a great store of cultural associations for places, events, objects, colors, etc., but during the stress of reading in a second language they will not access that information. By asking them in advance, for example, “What does the color white symbolize?” or “What words would you use to describe a swan?” students can be primed for making those connections when they are reading.

Frequently students’ linguistic abilities are not at pace with their interpretive skills. One technique to help students express nuanced ideas more precisely is to provide a word bank. This enables students to recognize and to choose words that they cannot independently produce and allows them to articulate richer and more precise observations. Another excellent strategy is to provide an image. For example, when teaching “Verso XXXIX” by José Martí, giving students the translations of the words cardo (thistle) and ortiga (nettle) may not be productive; without a background in botany, they will not derive the symbolism in either language. However, well-chosen images that highlight the characteristics of the plants will help students to understand the poet’s message.

Another helpful strategy for pre-teaching can be to use a word cloud (there are numerous word cloud generators on the web). This tool presents the text in a visual way that accentuates words that repeat and can help to forecast key ideas and themes. For example, Figure 1 shows a word cloud for “Proverbios y cantares, XXIX” by Antonio Machado. Students will immediately notice the words caminante and camino and start to forecast the theme by drawing associations with the verb caminar. The teacher can also check for understanding of other words (for example, sino and huellas) that students may not know or immediately recall.

Lastly, it can be very beneficial to have students listen to the literary text read aloud. While the teacher may choose to read it, other options are to record a colleague (thus giving students exposure to another speaker’s voice, especially useful if the work’s voice has a gender identity that is different from the teacher’s) or to find a recording on the internet (occasionally it is even possible to find the work read by the author him or herself). Students tend to read (both aloud and silently to themselves) in monotone, but by hearing the work, they will be preconditioned to anticipate tone and pacing, and will be more likely to make note of rhyme, repetition, and alliteration (see Appendix A for another type of pre-reading activity).
During-reading Activities

As students work through the literary text, carefully designed activities will enhance their comprehension, provide focus, and develop their analytical skills.

Chunking text is one of the most effective things a teacher can do when teaching a literary text, especially prose, drama, or longer poems. Breaking the text into smaller segments makes it less intimidating to students and allows them (and the teacher) to check for understanding along the way. Chunking the text also means the footnotes can be grouped more closely with the text, making them more accessible and useful.

Highlighting important parts of the text is also very helpful in drawing students’ attention to an author’s word choice or grammatical usage. For example, while students at this level may conceptually understand the uses of tú and Usted, they are unlikely to notice shifts between the two that a more advanced reader would perceive and interpret. However, if students’ attention is pointedly directed to these words, they are more likely to notice them and to recognize the cultural significance.

Graphic organizers are another very useful tool. Students can complete graphic organizers to help identify relationships: a family tree, a timeline, before and after, causes and effects, etc. A graphic organizer can also help students to make comparisons or find patterns, for example, the duality of Julia de Burgos and her alter ego in the poem “A Julia de Burgos.” Graphic organizers can be left entirely blank for the students to complete, or partially filled in by the teacher if students require greater scaffolding.

Visuals can also support students’ comprehension and interpretation. For example, the beginning of Carmen Laforet’s novel Nada is very descriptive (“El olor especial, el gran rumor de la gente, las luces siempre tristes . . .”). However, most students will fail to note the author’s multisensory language. By adding a simple visual showing a nose, an ear, an eye and a mouth, and asking students to circle which of the five senses are used in the description, intermediate readers’ appreciation of the literary qualities of the text can be raised. Photographic or art images can also help students to fill gaps in understanding. For example, an image of a flower growing in harsh conditions will aid a student to visualize the lines “Tú creces de mi vida en el desierto/como crece en un páramo la flor” (Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer, “Rima XCI”). With the support of the image, students lacking experience and confidence are more likely to have that gratifying “aha moment” while reading the text.

After-reading Activities

It is important to leave time after a reading to check for understanding, to promote higher order thinking, and to give students time to reflect and to make lasting, personal connections with the text.

Manipulatives are excellent for kinesthetic learners and a nice change of pace for all students. While manipulatives can feel like a game, they can be used effectively for a variety of purposes, such as plot ordering (put slips of paper with plot developments into chronological order) or assigning personality traits or actions written on cards to specific characters. These kinds of activities can be used for any kind of information that can be ordered, sorted, ranked, or categorized. Another activity that allows students to interact with the text in a physical way is a gallery walk. Here, students can be asked to match quotes from the text with a number of images posted around the room that represent events, emotions, or characters. Or, students can view the images and narrate orally or in writing what part of the text they associate with the image and why.

Creating a personal visual is another excellent interpretive activity for students. A comic strip format that asks students to present key points in the narration is an excellent way to check for understanding. Or, having students create an image that represents a specific moment in the literary work can help them to reach greater emotional depth. Some students may prefer to use stock images available on the internet while others may choose to use their own hand. Either way, students are thinking creatively and imaginatively about the text and seeking the best way to present it visually.

Performances can also be highly effective. These may take the form of a dramatic reading, a puppet show, or a performance
video. Performances can be especially effective for literary works where there is real drama that students can get excited about. Students will be able to give an authentic voice to a scene of family conflict from Rodolfo Usigli’s play *El niño y la niebla*. The polyphonic nature of Nicolás Guillén’s poem “Sensemayá” lends itself very well to performance (the investment in a stuffed animal snake that can be ritually sacrificed is worthwhile).

Intermediate students can also be asked to express their interpretation by writing the poem or story from another perspective (for example, the snake in “Sensemayá”). Alternatively, they can write the next scene or a different conclusion, or write to the author with follow-up questions, advice, or a response (the “Hombre pequeño” in Alfonsina Storni’s poem of the same name can pen a reply to the poet).

The inclusion of music is another way to enrich students’ interpretive experiences and practice listening skills, as well. The internet has a huge array of videos of poems set to music in settings ranging from classical to heavy metal and every musical genre in between. Ask students to react to the musical adaptation, for example, “Are the lyrics identical to poem, and if not, why do you think they are different?” “Does the music change the way you think about the reading?” “Do you like the interpretation?” “Do you think the original author would?” Students can also be asked to think of a song they know that they think expresses the same ideas as the work and to justify their comparison (see Appendix B for another type of after-reading activity).

Conclusion

In conclusion, literature can and should be taught at the advanced beginner and intermediate levels, but assessing the content and language of the text, and clearly understanding what students should learn is critical. This understanding will allow the teacher to design the right scaffolding activities to support students’ exploration of the text and to enhance their understanding and interpretation. Literature can be an exciting and purposeful component of advanced beginner and intermediate curricula, and when incorporated thoughtfully, students will benefit linguistically and personally from the experience.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Antes de leer: *Nada* de Carmen Laforet

Imagina que viajaste todo el día y llegaste solo/a en una nueva ciudad. ¿Cómo te sientes? (Pon círculos).

“La viuda de Montiel”

Después de leer: Una lápida para José Montiel

Opción A: Imagina que eres del pueblo. Escribe una inscripción para la lápida y adórnalas según tu percepción de José Montiel.

Opción B: Imagina que eres la viuda de Montiel. Escribe una inscripción para la lápida y adórnalas según tu percepción de José Montiel.

Appendix B

Antes de leer: *Nada* de Carmen Laforet

Imagina que viajaste todo el día y llegaste solo/a en una nueva ciudad. ¿Cómo te sientes? (Pon círculos).

“La viuda de Montiel”

Después de leer: Una lápida para José Montiel

Opción A: Imagina que eres del pueblo. Escribe una inscripción para la lápida y adórnalas según tu percepción de José Montiel.

Opción B: Imagina que eres la viuda de Montiel. Escribe una inscripción para la lápida y adórnalas según tu percepción de José Montiel.
Recap of CT COLT Fall Conference
2019

Jill Griswold, Fall Conference Committee
Glastonbury Public Schools
@srtagriswold23

Our 2019 Fall Conference, “Building Pathways to Proficiency” was held Sunday, October 20th and Monday October 21st in Cromwell, CT. Over the course of those two days, nearly 50 workshops were offered to conference attendees. The workshops are truly the heart of our conference and we want to thank all of the presenters who put their time and energy into delivering informative and dynamic sessions for all of the teachers who traveled from near and far for this professional learning opportunity.

Given the theme of this year’s conference, many sessions focused on research-based strategies and creative ways to build students’ proficiency in all three modes of communication. Other sessions included information on how to use apps such as PearDeck and Flipgrid to build proficiency-based learning activities; how to improve upon curriculum for heritage learners; a few brought awareness to mental health in the classroom with sessions on mindfulness; and finally, sessions that continued the conversation on the importance of using authentic materials with real-world tasks. During her keynote address, ACTFL Teacher of the Year Rebecca Aubrey shared what teachers should “pack” to help support their students’ journey to proficiency. In between sessions, attendees had the opportunity to visit nearly 30 exhibitors.

One of the new changes to this year’s conference was the addition of the “Unconference” held during the last session of the day. Conference attendees were invited to participate in an “unconference” to discuss their professional learning from the day. Participants were grouped by similar interests and the conversations were driven by topics of their choice.

We thank everybody who attended and look forward to seeing you all next year. If you are interested in joining the Fall Conference Committee to help us prepare for 2020, please contact Amanda Robustelli-Price at robustellipricea@ctcolt.org.

Teachers participating in the “Unconference”

Tara Smith and Carla DeStefanis at our photobooth
Some Highlights of the 2019 Fall Conference

(Left to right) President-Elect Amanda Robustelli-Price, ACTFL Teacher of the Year Rebecca Aubrey, and President Lea Graner-Kennedy

Richard De Meij, 2018-2019 CT COLT Teacher of the Year delivering his presentation, ‘Using Singing & Magic As Pathways to Proficiency’

Alan Beck, Latin teacher at South Windsor High School, presenting on using Roman coins in the classroom
Wine Tasting Class
by Allyson Power

On Thursday evening, November 7th, CT COLT members and friends from Southwestern CT gathered for great conversation and camaraderie. They participated in the "Wandering through Wine" tasting class at Total Wine in Norwalk, Connecticut where they sampled eight delicious sparkling, white, and red wines from Spain and Portugal in a private class taught by a wine expert.

All the proceeds benefit the Kenneth A. Lester Student Summer Immersion Scholarship Fund. This fund was created in memory of the organization's founding father and its first president and helps to defray the cost of summer language study in a summer language experience program. If you know of an interested student, please recommend they apply here: https://ctcolt.org/awards-contests/student-awards/

We look forward to another great event soon!

Organizational News

AATF French Teachers Fabulous Fall 2019

By Honore Radshaw Secretary AATF- CT chapter

The AATF Connecticut kicked off the new school year with the sixth annual “Rentreé Gathering” in Milford at the welcoming Bistro Basque. Members and friends, new and old, enjoyed Basque-style appetizers, custom cocktails and wine while connecting and re-connecting with French teachers from all over the state.

Next on the fall agenda was the COLT Conference where President of the AATF-CT chapter, Jon Shee presented on October 21. In his fun, music filled presentation Jon shared how to organize and execute World Language Lip Dubs and Flash Mobs. These themed activities can get an entire school community mobilized, energized, and excited about languages. AATF CT also greeted teachers at the conference and shared information about our activities and support at our busy info booth.

For National French Week (November 4 to 10), CT schools and students all over the country participated in the AATF National Francophone Cultural Trivia Contest. It was an on-line event using Kahoot and was open to French students from grades 1 to 12 and undergraduates in university whose teachers belong to the American Association of Teachers of French. There was a Grand Prize of $100 for the grades 1 to 8 winner and $250 for the High school/university winner, as well as $50.00 prizes for runners up.
The fabulous fall meeting was a unique opportunity for French teachers to learn about Belgian chocolate and wine. The “Atelier de Chocolaterie et Vins” was interesting, delicious and fun. It featured Belgian Master Chocolatier, Benoit of BE Chocolate who provided an educational workshop about all things chocolate and led attendees in a ganache-making activity. He also explained the paired wines which accompanied the tastings.

Coming up in for Connecticut French students, parents and teachers in 2020 is a varied and diverse list of activities.

- January 12 - French Hockey Night with the Sound Tigers (parents, students, teachers and friends)
- January 24 – LIVE French musical ensemble cabaret. (Teachers)
- March TBA – AATF prize applications due
- April 22 – NEW AATF student singing competition “Alors, On Chante” at Brunswick School
- April TBA – AATF Prize Ceremony at Hopkins School
- May TBA – La Réunion Printanière

We invite French teachers to explore our website www.aatfct.org, follow us on Twitter https://twitter.com/aatfct and join us for fabulous fellowship, fun and professional development.

**News from CT Schools**

**El Mes De Herencia Latina at Stonington High School**

By Taylor Donovan, Executive Board SHH, Pura Vida Chapter

¡Todos a una!

Latino Heritage Month, celebrated from September 15th to October 15th, is an event that the Spanish National Honors Society always recognizes. To commemorate Latino Heritage Month, we shared the beauty of Latino art and culture with the rest of our student body in several ways to promote respect for diversity and draw attention to a variety of accomplishments from different countries.

This year, we kicked off the month by playing a song in Spanish over the loudspeaker each morning, followed by a short description of the cultural significance of the song and songwriter written by Spanish Honors Society members. Songs of all different backgrounds were played, from Shakira’s “Africa” to Santana, and the soundtrack of Disney’s popular Día de los Muertos movie Coco; they all shared a Latin background and gave students a tune to appreciate on the way to their morning classes.

The Latino music appreciation didn’t stop after the first bell, however–at lunch, SHS Jazz Band members gathered to play more Latino music. Teachers and students were delighted to hear songs such as “Oye Como Va” and “Coconut Champagne” drift through the cafeteria.

To engage students outside of the language classes, we also decorated the cafeteria. The flags of all Spanish-speaking countries were hung alongside scrapbook pages in Spanish that explained how famous Latinos have made an impact on our society. The focal point of these decorations was a large poster that read, “¡Celebremos el Mes de Herencia Latina!”
We also supported the Latino community by running a car wash to raise funds for Puerto Rico hurricane relief through the volunteer organization All Hands and Hearts. Last year the Society donated $750 to build roofs in Puerto Rico and this car wash allowed us to raise more money to continue supporting the cause.

The Stonington High School Spanish Honors Society filled the hallways with vibrant culture in celebration of Latino heritage: music was played, art was hung, Latinos were celebrated, and money was raised. It is a responsibility and a privilege for the Spanish Honors Society to celebrate Latino Heritage Month with our fellow students and staff. By celebrating this month, we begin to expose others to a rich heritage that should be appreciated by all.

Upcoming Events

**Poster Contest**

**Theme:** Proficiency: Continuing the Journey

**Chair:** Judith Ojeda

{ojedaj@ct.colt.org}

**Postmark Deadline:** March 2, 2020

**Rhyme Celebration**

**Date:** April 8, 2020

**Snow Date:** April 22, 2020

**Time:** 5:00 – 7:00

(snack will NOT be provided)

**Venue:** Glastonbury-East Hartford Magnet School
95 Oak Street, Glastonbury, CT 06033

**Chair:** Kate Krotzer

**Hosts:** Betty Chang, Maridalys Lopez, Kevin Maki, CREC, Glastonbury-East Hartford Magnet School

**Theme:** “Our Planet Earth”

Rhymes, Songs and Tongue Twisters

**Poetry Recitation Contest**

**Date:** April 22, 2020

**Snow Date:** April 23, 2020

**Venue:** Wethersfield High School
411 Wolcott Hill Road, Wethersfield, CT 06109

**Chair:** Matthew Mangino & other WHS FL Staff

**Postmark Deadline:** February 14, 2020

(no extensions will be granted)
### Officers/Executive Committee

#### President
LEA GRANER KENNEDY (2020)
Stonington Public Schools
granerkennedyl@ctcolt.org

#### Vice-President/President-Elect
AMANDA ROBUSTELLI-PRICE (2020)
Enfield Public Schools
robustellipricea@ctcolt.org

#### Treasurer
PAUL M. ST. LOUIS (2020)
275 Cedar Swamp Road, Monson, MA 01057-9303
stlouis@ctcolt.org

#### Recording Secretary
JOHN ROOK (2020)
Glastonbury Public Schools
rookj@ctcolt.org

#### Corresponding Secretary
KATE KROTZER (2020)
Glastonbury Public Schools
krotzerk@ctcolt.org

#### Immediate Past President
JAMES WILDMAN (2020)
Glastonbury Public Schools
wildmanj@ctcolt.org

#### Ex-Officio Director/Director-At-Large

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<tr>
<th>University Liaison</th>
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<td>LINDA L. DALPE</td>
<td>TARA SMITH</td>
<td>JOSEPH PARODI-BROWN</td>
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<td>Canton Public Schools</td>
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#### Coordinators

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<tr>
<th>Advocacy (2020)</th>
<th>Teacher of the Year (2020)</th>
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<tr>
<td>REBECCA AUBREY</td>
<td>MATT MANGINO</td>
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<td>South Windsor Public Schools</td>
<td>Wethersfield Public Schools</td>
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<td>New Haven Public Schools</td>
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<th>Membership (2020)</th>
<th>Community and Business Outreach (2020)</th>
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<td>ALLYSON POWER</td>
<td>JOCELYN TAMBORELLO-NOBLE</td>
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<td>West Hartford Public Schools</td>
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<th>CT LILL (2020)</th>
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<td>LEA GRANER KENNEDY</td>
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<td>Stonington Public Schools</td>
<td>Rocky Hill Public Schools</td>
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<td>BRIGHTTE LANGE</td>
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### Affiliations

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Please visit our newly redesigned website at www.ctcolt.org!