



ECIS MFL NEWSLETTER

June 2001

European Council of International Schools

Modern Foreign Languages Committee

The Hague November 15-18, 2001

At ECIS Conference which will take place in the Hague in November 2001, includes the *first ECIS Interdisciplinary Pre-Conference Workshop* on Thursday, 15 November at the Golden Tulip Bel Air Hotel, The Hague, Netherlands. The Modern Foreign Language Committee is a part of the team of subject committees (along with Art, Music, ESL & Mother Tongue, PE, Social Studies, IT and Library & Information Services) involved in the planning of the event.

This is a one-day event, starting at 8h30 and concluding at 17h00. The keynote address speaker is **Dr. Harvey Silver**, President of Silver, Strong & Associates which was recently named as one of the most influential teachers in the US.

This exciting event is limited in participation. If you are interested, be sure to check the ECIS Website for upcoming information on the pre-conference workshop.

A Cure for the End of Year Doldrums

Dr. Elaine A. Chambart, Ph.D.

Dean of Languages and Special Studies

As the end of the year approached, my IB I French class (myself included) was ready for a breather. So I decided to brainstorm with myself in order to come up with an entertaining, yet instructive classroom idea. Technology first came to mind, yet we were all "Power Pointed" out, and the Internet had now become overused, at least for the current academic year. I took my cue from TOK and asked my students to prepare a 5-minute presentation on a global issue, in the target language, of course. The class had one week in which to do the assignment, and they could present either individually or in groups of 2 or 3. Enthusiasm reigned when the project was announced, and a time schedule was set up and strictly adhered to.

What made this end of year event special was that I recorded the first minute of each presentation on a digital camcorder. Upon completion of all the presentations, I played back the material on the Language Media Center's overhead TV. As students viewed their work and that of their classmates on screen, they were required to take notes and make constructive criticisms. After the viewing, a class discussion ensued, and comments were generally objective and helpful.

My class and I managed to end the year on a pleasant note. We did not waste time or grope for topics of conversation or overdose on review sheets. In the true IB tradition, we learned about different viewpoints on current issues (politics, environment, healthcare, women's rights, etc.), and we saw ourselves on TV. I hope to do this again next year and involve the IB Spanish, Italian, and Hebrew students.

Multilingual Children and the International School Classroom

Tracey Tokuhama-Espinosa

TRACEY TOKUHAMA-ESPINOSA is a native of California who studied her Master's of Education at Harvard University and her undergraduate degrees of international relations and mass communication at Boston University. Tracey has taught in international schools in Japan, Ecuador, and is currently an early reading teacher in France. Tracey gives dozens of workshops yearly on raising multilingual children to professional counselors, teachers, families and corporations throughout Switzerland and France. She speaks and writes in English and Spanish fluently, knows conversational French, some Japanese, and basic German. She and her husband, Cristian, are raising three multilingual children in English, Spanish, German and French.

Attending an international school is usually a rewarding experience filled with social and academic gains. However, for some it can be a time of anxiety. A significant number of children experiencing anxiety are found to have problems linked directly or indirectly to language challenges. In my book *Raising Multilingual Children: Foreign Language Acquisition and Children* I define the "Ten Key Factors in Raising Multilingual Children" which are Aptitude, Timing, Motivation, Strategy, Consistency, Opportunity, the Linguistic Relationship between the Languages, Siblings, Gender and Hand-Use as it reflects cerebral dominance. Each one of these ten factors is important in every child's success with foreign languages. Awareness of these factors can help teachers in their vital roles in this learning and adjustment process.

Aptitude: Each person is born with a certain aptitude for different life skills. People with a high aptitude for foreign languages learn languages easily; people with low aptitude do so with difficulty. You cannot influence how much aptitude a person has, but you can make the most of what exists.

Timing: The windows of opportunity when certain skills can best be learned. There are three windows of opportunity for foreign language acquisition: from birth to nine-months, between four and eight years old, and from old age on back.

Motivation includes both positive versus negative, and internal versus external factors. Falling in love is a fantastic motivating force, as is hatred.

Strategy means making a conscious decision to approach language development in a certain way and **Consistency** is each person's (including teachers') ability to stay true to the agreed upon strategy.

Opportunity is the daily use of the language(s) in meaningful situations.

The Linguistic Relationship between Languages: Does the native language share roots with the second language? If so, the second language is easier to learn due to the similarity of grammar, vocabulary and sound systems.

Siblings can have a positive as well as negative effect. In the positive, siblings learn a great deal from one another as they have a greater number of verbal exchanges and conversations in a day. However, in the negative case, one child may dominate the language exchange and stunt the other's development.

Gender: Sexist as it may sound at first, we now have the technology to see how boys and girls approach language from different parts of the brain and this is influential in both first, second and subsequent languages.

Most people have their main language area of the brain in the left hemisphere, but a small percentage (30%) of those who write with their left hand and five percent of those who write with their right hand actually have language spread over a greater area. This group may favor different teaching methods, and thus **Hand-Use**, as it reflects cerebral dominance, makes up the last of our ten factors.

Every individual will combine the Ten Factors differently. Such individuality is what gives researchers and educators awe at the human capacity for language, and what challenges policy makers and teachers to emphasize an individual approach to the international school classroom.

The International Baccalaureate Organization: Crossing Borders through a Discourse of Internationalism and Language Education

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This study aims to address the challenges presented by today's global community at odds with national frontiers and changing landscapes by focusing on the conceptualization of internationalism and its relationship to language education as articulated by the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO). In pursuit of this aim, IBO publications that provide a historical account of the development of the IBO and the development of its IB Diploma language programs will be analyzed. These documents will cover the time period from 1968, the founding year of the organization, to the present day. They will be analyzed in view of the three following objectives: 1) to trace the ways

“internationalism” has been conceptualized by the IBO; 2) to ascertain the relationship between internationalism and the study of languages within the context of the IB Diploma Programme and 3) to reveal ideologies about language and culture that are embedded in a discourse of internationalism and that inform language curriculum development at the secondary level.

The crossing of linguistic and cultural frontiers is seen as a primary means for broadening international understanding and developing a global citizenry. These boundary crossings occur in international and national schools and are reflected in curricula and school communities. The IBO represents an intersection of all four of these elements through its provision of an international curriculum to the diverse communities of international schools and national schools, public and private. In light of its aims for internationalism and its emphasis on the rigorous study of more than one language, the IBO provides a particularly apt site to bring into question the link between these two areas.

The methodological approach employed in this study is based on critical discourse analysis (CDA). CDA provides a rationale for examining discourse as a means of social change and a methodological framework that calls for the analysis of text, the analysis of discourse practices and the analysis of social context. It is hoped that the findings of this study will have important implications for discursive and social practices relating to education and the aims for a culturally and linguistically inclusive community.

All teachers who want to receive the Newsletter by e-mail are requested to put their personal or their school's e-mail address on a special address list. Send your address to *Anita Sandoval-Vail, Chair* (e-mail) anita_sandoval-vail@fis.edu

Interested colleagues will find the Web Site Forum for the Modern Foreign Languages Committee at http://www.ecis.org/Modern_Langs_Forum. The forum is designed for educators to consult on professional issues, share curriculum ideas, plan conferences and answer specific teacher inquiries.

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