



MCTLC Newsletter

*Our Mission is to Advance the Teaching of
World Languages and Cultures in Minnesota*

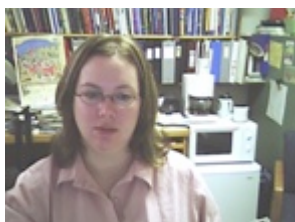


Vol. II, No. 8

November 2011

MCTLC Leaps into the Future with Its First Webinar

To Tweet or Not to Tweet: Is that Really the Question?



On December 3, 2011 from 10 – 12 CST, we will meet via Wimba Live Classroom to discuss the latest trends of using different social media applications in our classrooms, particularly to teach languages. We will look at Twitter, Facebook, LiveMocha, blogs, and other medium as we first work to familiarize ourselves with these applications and then strive to understand the best ways to use these as pedagogical tools. We will examine the advantages and disadvantages of each platform. Participants will also learn characteristics of today's learners and ways to engage those learning preferences, with or without technology! All you need to join us is a computer with internet access and a microphone / speakers or phone. We'll do the rest! So, don't wait another day to learn more about tweeting, blogging, and more.

Dr. Gay Rawson is Chair of the Department of French and Russian, an Associate Professor of French, and director of the French International Business Program at Concordia College. An avid traveler, she frequently leads students to destinations such as France, Switzerland, Germany, Guadeloupe, Cameroon and most recently Vietnam. Dr. Rawson also teaches in the Master of Education in World Language Instruction program, which features courses at Concordia College and Concordia Language Villages. She is an expert in best pedagogical practices for implementing technology online and into language classrooms and uses this technical knowledge to enhance curriculum and teacher development. A keynote speaker and active researcher, Dr. Rawson will bring her expertise in technology, her experience teaching educators how to use it, and her knowledge of pre-K-12 as well as college education to the table. You can register at www.mctlc.org. The cost is \$10 for members and \$40 for nonmembers. You will receive a certificate for 2 CEU's.

Letter from the MCTLC President

What I learned about language teaching during piano lessons



For many years I sat and listened while my lovely daughter, (while I'm willing to share honors with a lot of people about a lot of things, sorry, no one has a better daughter) was taking piano lessons. She started with the Suzuki method when she was six and continued until she was eighteen. She was never a concert pianist, but she learned a lot and loved her lessons and practice, so we continued. While I sat there, I constantly compared how her teacher was teaching her to play the piano with how we teach students to learn a language. Of course, there are the obvious differences. Her teacher was teaching one student while we commonly teach over thirty at a time. Her student wanted to learn and practice, while many of ours are thinking about what else they could be doing. But there are also many similarities. And those are what I spent my time thinking about during those piano lessons, as I had little else to do.

It takes about the same amount of time to learn a language and to learn to play a musical instrument. If we want to reach a level of proficiency that allows us to use the skill in social circles for our benefit and the benefit of others, it takes at least five years for the average person. It seems to work best if people begin early in life. The student needs prolonged, continuous practice in order to become proficient. Researchers in mental activity say that learning to play a musical instrument and learning to speak another language during childhood cause the same kind of increased mental efficiency in the brain. So what did I learn from sitting and watching those lessons?

The Suzuki method relies heavily on listening before producing. We cannot expect children to produce piano music that sounds pleasing if they have not listened to what it's supposed to sound like many

times. We played the Suzuki tapes (yes, this was when we still used cassette tapes) during dinner, during bath time, during play time. Whenever Edith began to learn to play a new song, she had already listened to it many times. This was particularly crucial during the early years. As she grew in her ability to distinguish what aspects of piano playing were important, it was just important that she listen to quality piano music regularly, not necessarily the music she was learning at the time. So to, in the early stages, our students need input, input, and more input. They need to know how the language is supposed to sound and how one is supposed to put sentences together. It is so important to have a fluent speaker of the language who floods students with talk in the target language at the earliest levels of language acquisition. We cannot afford the attitude found in some departments that "Oh, his/her Spanish is good enough to teach the lower levels." When I teach beginning classes, I follow the rule that students must hear the word at least seven times before I ask them to produce it. Of course, one cannot stand in front of the classroom and repeat a word seven times and expect students to pay attention. So I have many different ways of inserting the word into meaningful contexts that are comprehensible to the students and require some kind of response from them other than pronouncing the word. When they do get around to pronouncing it, there really are no pronunciation errors to correct. Even more important is that this process is followed even before the students see the word in print. Early Suzuki players learn pieces by listening and memorizing. Only as they have gained some proficiency, do they begin to look at what those songs look like written down on a piece of paper. We need to keep clearly in mind the primacy of oral language in the beginning levels. Written activities should be secondary at the early stages.

I also learned the importance of breaking things down into very simple steps. My daughter's teacher was a master in patiently applying this very simple concept to learning how to play any song. Difficult passages were always taught before she actually began to learn the song so she wouldn't stumble on them as she learned the song. I went back to my beginning psychology class at the University of Minnesota where we learned about behavioral conditioning. And I remember learning that anyone can learn anything if it is broken down into small enough steps. Visit the special education rooms for your most handicapped students and you will see how special education teachers have learned to break everything down into very simple steps. Whenever my students are looking confused, I think about how I can break what we are learning down into even simpler steps. As they progress in their learning, of course we want students to be able to hypothesize and synthesize and just plain guess what's being said. But in beginning stages, it's best to make everything very clear.

I remember how patient my daughter's teacher was to ensure that my daughter learned it correctly the first time. Knowing how difficult it is to break a habit if someone has practiced it incorrectly a number of times, she never sent her home to practice anything until she was assured my daughter knew how to play it correctly. Then I think of how often I am worried about getting through a lesson in the allotted time and I try to take shortcuts. Remember that if a student has said something incorrectly a number of times, they will probably say it incorrectly for however

long they speak the language. At upper levels we expect students to be able to connect the dots on their own. But at beginning levels, we need to set things up so that they say it and practice it correctly.

Another thing I clearly remember is that if my daughter played a segment incorrectly, her teacher would patiently reteach it. Then she would have her play it correctly five or six times. I asked her once why she did this. I've never forgotten her answer, "If she plays it once incorrectly and once correctly, the chances that her brain will remember the correct way are only 50%." I thought about how often I quickly moved on, eager to cover more material, as soon as my students say something correctly.

I know you are probably saying, "How can I apply this to my classroom of 36 level two students, all of whom are at different stages of language acquisition." I struggle with that myself on a daily basis. But I do try to remember some of these simple things as I plan my lessons and as I interact with students in the classroom. And keeping these simple principles in mind will probably mean some discussions at the departmental level on whether we really do need to "cover" the first three units during first semester.

Betty Lotterman, President





MCTLC 2011 Award Winners

Pro Lingua: *Minnesota Zoo*

This award is given in recognition of outstanding service to and support of education in world languages and cultures by a person or Minnesota organization/business that is not a world-languages educator.

Emma Birkmaier Outstanding Language Educator: *Susan B. Nordquist*

This award is given in recognition of outstanding service and support for world languages and cultures to someone within the language-teaching profession in Minnesota.

Outstanding Student Teacher Award: *Kaitlin Weis*

This award is given in recognition of outstanding service and extraordinary potential in providing excellent instruction in the world language classroom by a student teacher.

Percy Fearing Award: *Barbara Cartford*

This award is given in recognition of excellence in the creative development of instructional materials for teaching world languages and cultures by a classroom teacher in Minnesota.



Practitioner's Corner

Find Your Mystery Partner

By Betty Lotterman, Spanish teacher at Mounds View High School

This activity works well at beginning levels, especially when you want students to practice the basic question/answer patterns before they are really ready to formulate the questions themselves. It can be adapted to any set of grammar, content, or vocabulary you are teaching. I use it particularly for those questions that you want every student to know how to answer quickly and comfortably.

What do you need?

All you need is a set of notecards, one for each student in your class. Write a question on half of the notecards and an answer on the other half. Make sure that you use questions and answers that are unique, that is an answer could not be used to answer more than one question. I tell my students that they will find a logical answer to each question, but not necessarily the answer they would give.

How do you play?

I mix up the cards and hand one to each student, telling them they may look at it, but not show it to anyone else. If I have an odd number of students for the class, I play. I give them one minute to memorize the question or answer on their card; then they hand them in, face down. I ask the students with questions to stand up; students with answers stay seated. The students with questions need to go around the room asking the other students their question. The students with answers need to repeat their answer, and then both students decide if they are partners. When two partners find each other, they sit down together. Finally we go around the room and each set of partners repeat their question and answer and the class gives a thumbs up or down as to whether they really are partners.

You can use this as a way for students to find partners for a follow up pair activity or you can use it as a stand alone activity to review material they will need for a quiz or test. My students really enjoy this activity because they are anxious to find out who their partner will be.



Minnesota Teachers Meet to Network Close to Home

On September 17, world language teachers from across the state of Minnesota met with their MCTLC regional representatives to share a cup of coffee or tea and ideas about teaching. MCTLC raffled off a gift membership to MCTLC from among those who participated and we are proud to announce the prize goes to Dave Schuettler from the Northeast Minnesota region. We want to give a special thanks to each of the regional representatives who worked hard to organize these events. We hope this tradition of getting together to support one other in our profession will continue and grow. Here are the reports from the individual regional representatives

Martin Pflug from the Northeast Minnesota region had seven teachers at the meeting from all levels and the sharing of ideas was very productive. They agreed to have another regional meeting in the spring. Naomi Pilantz from the Central Minnesota East region had three teachers attend, Monica Cofell, Jennifer Day with her baby Molly and Tracey Kloeckl-Jimenez. They felt the discussion was great. In the East Suburban Metro region, Shannon Klint reported that they had a great discussion about TPRS and Language Acquisition Theory as well as talking about travel and culture. In St Paul, Linda Chang reported that six teachers attended and they plan to meet again on November

12 at 9:00 AM. Ayumi Stockman from Minneapolis mentioned that two teachers participated, one from Egypt and one from China. They shared stories about their cultures and talked about their first few weeks of teaching in Minnesota. In the North Suburban Metro area Marjie Hay reported that Charlie Jordan talked about his new class for native/heritage speakers of Spanish and Jessica Trost shared ways to use an online quizzing platform to assess her German students' mastery of concepts.

If you do not know who your regional representative is, you can find out by clicking on the Contact link on the left hand menu of the website at www.mctlc.org. Select regional representatives. Please feel free to contact your regional representative with any questions you might have about MCTLC or to plan another regional meeting. We are currently looking for volunteers to be regional representatives from the South Central Minnesota, East Suburban, and Southwest Suburban regions. If you would be interested in serving in one of these positions, please contact:

Betty Lotterman

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2012 Central States Conference

A joint conference of the Central States Conference on the Teaching
of Foreign Languages and the Wisconsin Association For
Language Teachers



March 8 – 10, 2012
Hyatt Regency Milwaukee
Milwaukee, WI



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CARLA's Tara Fortune, Immersion Projects Coordinator, in the news:

Two stories came out in Twin Cities media recently regarding Minneapolis Mandarin immersion programs:

WCCO Chanel 4: *Kindergarten Lessons All Taught In Chinese*

October 10, 2011, Holly Wagner reporting

See the video: <http://minnesota.cbslocal.com/2011/10/10/kindergarten-lessons-all-taught-in-chinese/>

Pioneer Press: *Chinese immersion program draws questions, then converts*

By Mila Koumpilova, 10/9/11

Read the article: http://www.twincities.com/ci_19078932



STATE OF MINNESOTA

Office of Governor Mark Dayton

130 State Capitol ♦ 75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard ♦ Saint Paul, MN 55155

October 14, 2011

Dear World Language and Cultural Educators:

I would like to congratulate the Minnesota Council on the Teaching of Languages and Cultures (MCTLC) on its 50th anniversary. Our state has always placed a high value on education and this Council has helped us live up to that ideal. Over the past 50 years the MCTLC has strived to insure its programs provide Minnesota's students the best quality education available.

The MCTLC helps our educators communicate and develop innovative methods of promoting the fluency of students in languages other than English. I appreciate your continued efforts and the MCTLC's support in ensuring that our future as a leading state of educators remains strong.

Minnesota's multilingualism and multiculturalism has enriched our state's cultural foundation and diversified its economy. As Governor, I applaud the Minnesota Council on the Teaching of Languages and Cultures on its endeavors to build upon Minnesota's vibrant, open-minded, and educated community.

My best regards.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Dayton".

Mark Dayton
Governor

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Fax: (651) 797-1850

Website: <http://governor.state.mn.us>

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Note from the Editor, David Paulson:

We had so much exciting news to share with you – we decided to email this issue to our entire database! Members will still receive their November issue of LANGUAGE Magazine. Not a member? No magazine. Contact a Board member or visit our website to join: www.MCTL.org



2011 Executive Board

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