Conference Report

ACTFL '95: Standards and Assessment

by Chris Higgins
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At the 29th annual meeting of The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, which took place in Anaheim, California, the focus was on the newly published "Standards for Foreign Language Learning: Preparing for the 21st Century."

The development and implementation of the Standards were the thrust of the delegate assembly which preceded the annual meeting. During this assembly the delegates of affiliate organizations were given an overview of the Standards as well as a look at how some local groups are working to implement them into their state and local curricula. The final aspect of the assembly was a brainstorming session on what needs to be done locally and nationally to assist educators, school districts, and states to implement the Standards effectively in conjunction with their own curricular goals. This brainstorming process included small group discussion. In the final presentation and discussion of the day it was evident that technology needs to play a major role in the implementation process.

In the regular conference sessions during ACTFL '95, there were close to 50 sessions that had technology as the main theme. IALL sponsored five of these sessions with topics ranging from using satellite broadcasts and video in the language classroom to Internet resources for teaching and publication.

Global Technology

"Using Global Technology to Educate Global Workers" was given by Sharon Scinicariello and Warren Roby. Using satellite broadcasts, the Internet, and Minitel, Sharon and Warren demonstrated simple ways to bring authentic material into the language classroom. They highlighted Business French for their examples but fielded questions covering many different teaching situations. They also discussed copyright issues concerning the use of taped satellite broadcasts and Internet materials.

The Agora Language

"The Agora Language Marketplace: Publishing and Self-Publishing Through the Internet" was presented by Carolyn Fidelman for Miles Fidelman. After a heroic entrance following a bomb scare at the airport Carolyn showed the assembled group how the Agora Language Marketplace can provide foreign language software developers of low-volume materials a place to advertise and demonstrate their products. She accessed the WWW site and familiarized the audience with the many facets of the Agora Language Marketplace including the newsletter, the product list and the new Agora Showcase.

Teaching Strategies for Authentic Video

Paul R. "Dick" Kuettner offered "Video—Maximum Usefulness, Simply and Intelligently." Dick, who is known for his teaching strategies in using the authentic video document, led his audience to understand how uncomplicated and instrumental the use of film and video can be in teaching general and specific aspects of culture, grammar, syntax, vocabulary, and comprehension. He shared specific guidelines for reviewing video documents which should be followed in order to achieve maximum results from the document, the student, as well as the teacher.

QUILL Authoring System

Rick Thomas and Anna Boller spoke on "University-Secondary School Collaboration in Technology for FL Teaching: The Quill Project." During this session Rick and Anna demonstrated the QUILL authoring system. Anna discussed how, with the support and collaboration of Georgia Tech, Westminster High School was able to use the QUILL system to create interactive video lessons quickly and simply using digitized video. She also related how this collaboration with a university helped acquire funds in her school to buy new equipment and upgrade their language lab. Rick presented the technical aspects of the QUILL software and walked the audience through the lesson development process. Both presenters answered many questions ranging from technical concerns to copyright issues.

Nonverbal Aspects of Language Teaching

"Face to Face with Change: Implementation of Technology-Enabled Language Learning" was given by Carolyn Fidelman. In this session Carolyn used her interactive video program "In the French Body" (*Dans la peau des Français*) and "In the German Body"(*In deutsche Haut geschlüpft*) to discuss the nonverbal aspects of language teaching. She presented the process developed by Lawrence Wylie for the inclusion of nonverbal language skills in the foreign language classroom. Issues of teacher training and student motivation were also discussed.

IALL Interest Meeting and Conclucion

At the IALL interest meeting, held Sunday afternoon, there were many familiar faces as well as a few new ones. All in all, there were about 25 current and prospective IALL members. The current members were able to do some networking and answer many of the questions of the meeting participants. Many of the questions focussed on funding for technology, how to start a lab, what to do with it once it is in place, and training. Many people were able to make connections with IALL members from their local area as well as get information on the regional groups and IALL membership details. The IALL homepage was highlighted as a resource which participants could access for more information on IALL and regional activities.

The vendor Exhibition and Tech Fair at this year's ACTFL Conference offered attendees a look at some of the developments in technology-enhanced language learning. They also provided a time to examine new software and hardware as well as see the upgrades for well-known products. Attendance for both was low, but the people milling around the exhibits seemed to be genuinely excited about what they saw. I believe that was the general feeling of the whole conference. From the National Standards in Foreign Language Education to developments in teaching and learning strategies and the role of technology in language education, there was clearly an atmosphere of excitement to be found at ACTFL '95.

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