



ACTFL comes to California

by Paula Hirsch

The 2009 ACTFL Annual Convention and World Languages Expo was a huge success for both ACTFL and CLTA. The 5,000 participants exceeded the number of attendees at the 2008 Conference in Orlando, Florida. Of those participants, over 1000 were from our state.

California was also well represented among the presenters. Besides the 13 sessions that CLTA sponsored, there were over 30 other California professionals who submitted presentations that were accepted by ACTFL.

Duarte Silva, the Director of the California Foreign Language Project, hosted the NCSSFL meeting on Wednesday, November 17. This group of state foreign language supervisors asked CLTA to present our model for advocacy, as many states have not been as successful as CLTA in lobbying for world language and culture education.

The Opening General Session on Friday, November 20, had two purposes. It introduced the attendees to the five ACTFL Teacher of the Year candidates. The winner was Lisa Lilley, a Spanish Teacher from Springfield, MO, who will represent the world language profession

for 2010. After the presentation, Steve Hildebrand, the former Deputy Campaign Manager for President Barak Obama, addressed the participants. He talked about the need for teachers to become conversant in the technological gadgets to which the millennium generation is addicted. It was interesting to note that he suggested that we consider the use of social networks in our curriculum. But he also echoed another theme—the need for teachers to be advocates for the study of world languages and cultures.

For the next two and a half days, conferees attended a wide range of over 600 sessions on technology, methodology, culture, and literature and other topics. Of course, many of us took time out to visit the exhibit hall where ACTFL had over 200 vendors. Teachers were able to examine a wide array of teaching materials as well as buy videos, musical CDs, books and realia; in addition teachers could see many technological tools in action.

We hope that California teachers will continue to be a presence at the ACTFL Conference in the future. The 2010 Conference will be in Boston, MA.

Of Interest to the Profession

Hello-Hello.com, the world's first free online language learning and social networking website developed in collaboration with the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), officially launched during ACTFL's Annual Convention and World Languages Expo.

The revolutionary interactive online language course has a community of like-minded individuals that help each other in the learning process. Here are some of the highlights: LEARN a new language anytime, anywhere with online, interactive lessons that develop all skills you need. TEACH other members your language and learn from native speakers. COMMUNICATE with native speakers and make friends all over the world.

ACTFL Assembly of Delegates

By Lewie Johnson

On the third weekend in November every year, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), our national association, holds its annual convention. This year's convention was in San Diego. On the Thursday before the convention the Assembly of Delegates is convened. The Assembly of Delegates is comprised of representatives of state foreign language organizations and other special interest groups. This year I had the good fortune of representing CLTA. This is the first in a series of reports on the work of the Assembly of Delegates.

"Language Education: National Priorities and International Perspectives."

The first topic of the meeting was "Language Education: National Priorities and International Perspectives." Sylvia Crowder of the U. S. Department of Education reported both Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, and President Obama, proponents of Foreign Language Education and Exchange Programs, are increasing funding for FLAP grants. Andre Lewis, Assistant Secretary for International and Foreign Language Education, is working with ACTFL to set priorities for foreign language programs and to increase funding for FLAP grants. The National Security Language Initiative will have a new configuration of looking at the collaborative aspect of language learning around the world. Ms. Crowder further stated that in the department "All issues take collaboration; this administration is not a 'go it alone' administration."

Rich Girvin, Staff Member of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, said that his passion is foreign language education. He sees the state of the intelligence community's FL capability as abysmal and believes that congress must change laws and provide resources to support foreign language education. Within the intelligence community the need for foreign language capabilities is vital.

Outside the intelligence community the Department of Defense and the Defense Language Institute (DLI) are increasing training. "It is a criminal situation where soldiers are fighting in a country and no one in their unit speaks the language."

"We need to dramatically increase the number of foreign language speakers, legislate and provide resources. Fifteen of the most senior senators are listening to see what foreign language needs are."

Dave Edwards, Executive Director of the Joint National Committee for Languages, said that JNCL is 35 years old. It is the Washington presence of our profession. CLTA is a member of JNCL and we send delegates each year to guide the direction of foreign language education.

Cari Guittard, Executive Director of Business for Diplomatic Action, told us that business people are asking, "How can we work across cultures effectively? How do you work on the global stage?" Companies are looking for foreign language skills and a global mindset. The shift in attention to language learning has moved from security to collaborative. Because of No Child Left Behind, we have lost many elementary programs. Now we have the Race to the Top. Nobody should get to the top monolingual.

Kara Buchanan of EF Educational Tours, Partnership for 21st Century Skills, said that today there is a great need for communication and cross-cultural skills. We must prepare our students for the future. Most people will have 11 jobs before the age of 38, and most of these 11 jobs are not in existence yet. We see that there has been a shift to global-based economy and a need for global awareness.

"Language Education: State Priorities and Perspectives"

The second topic of the assembly was "Language Education: State Priorities and Perspectives"

Greg Roberts, World Language Specialist at the State Office of Education in Utah, told us that Utah decided to "go it alone" and not wait for the federal government to mandate second language initiatives. Consequently, Utah has the highest percentage of second language speakers. Utah State Initiatives include the creation of positions for world language specialists, the introduction of Chinese and Arabic programs, and dual immersion classrooms in critical languages. Although Utah is 51st in per pupil spending, it has 21 dual immersion programs. Dual immersion is the least expensive model and it results in highest proficiency. Language education is all about economic survival.

Pat Steadman, State Senator of Colorado and former lobbyist, spoke on advocacy. He said that FL Education is a matter of Economic Development. Advocacy is a critical piece. He enumerated various effective lobbying techniques:

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Languages Bring People Together

By Margaret Tsubakiyama

Languages bring people together. As language teachers, we all know that. For most of us, that is why we are in this profession. That—and the influence of a wonderful foreign language teacher somewhere along the way!

Thanks in part to the generosity of the CLTA, I was able to participate in a six-week intensive language program offered by the Japan Foundation in Urawa, Japan. During my time there, I expected to meet Japanese people and to learn new ways to introduce the richness of Japanese culture and language to my students here in California—and I did. I had many wonderful experiences with the Japanese teachers and staff at the institute: Nishimura-san who made sure we had everything we needed for our studies, Naito-sensei with whom we puzzled over the subtleties of the particles “wa” and “ga” in Japanese grammar, and Inaba-sensei who packed so many kanji compounds into each morning of class until we felt like our Canon Word Tank electronic dictionaries come to life.

All of this was fascinating, but what excited me most was the international community studying Japanese at the Institute. What a revelation! I knew I had colleagues in California (TJSC friends—I hope you’re reading this), but I had not thought of colleagues in Kenya, Nepal, India, Ireland, Mongolia, Turkey, Egypt, Armenia, Hungary, Russia, Columbia, and Venezuela. I didn’t know I had colleagues all over the world who are just as passionate about Japan and Japanese language education as I am.

With such an international crowd of teachers, Japanese was the common language on our morning walks, at the dinner table, and at the wonderful public bath we frequented. No matter what our nationality—Vietnamese, Polish, Greek, or Peruvian—all of us spoke Japanese ALMOST all of the time (all right—even teachers cheat sometimes). It reminded me of my summer with Sato-sensei and Marcus-sensei at Middlebury College so many years ago.

United though we were, we fell into our little groups, of course: there were the Indian women in their rainbow saris,

skyping their families back in Mumbai and Delhi. There were the impossibly young and cute teachers from Russia who always seemed to be hitting the Roppongi nightclubs and finding the best Japanese fashions—and having the figures to wear them. And of course there were the few, the proud, the brave—the eight male foreign language teachers on the course who took our teasing and flirting very well indeed. Thanks, guys. It wouldn’t have been as fun without you.

Returning to the position of student was also fascinating. It allowed me to rediscover one of the things that I love most about learning a foreign language: the incredible discipline required to master another language. More than twenty years after my first Japanese class in the basement of the East Asian Studies Building at the University of Michigan, I felt that same competitive instinct overtake me again as I prepared for classes at the Urawa Institute. Would I be able to use the vocabulary words correctly in class? Was my essay as free of errors as I could possibly make it? Would I be able to make through my twenty-minute lesson presentation without making a fool of myself?

Of course I had always thought of the Japanese language uniting my students in California with students in Japan and using it as a means to introduce them to the highlights of Japanese culture: kabuki, haiku, ikebana, and of course, anime and karaoke. But thanks to my experience this summer, I now see that learning Japanese also unites them with students all over the world, with a whole community that is united by an interest in Japan.

I was naïve. No—I underestimated the tremendous power of language. I had simply thought of uniting America and Japan, English and Japanese, Culver City, California and Tokyo, Japan. I realize now that it is not just two countries, but in our case, twenty-seven countries that were united by this one language. Twenty-seven countries, fifty teachers, and our two-thousand-plus students were united this summer. No, not just for this summer. We are united forever by the gift that is another language.

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1. Let your representatives know that you are there for a resource.
2. A phone message is very important. State your name and your zip code and succinctly state your position.
3. Few people call on education issues. 6 – 10 phone calls on something that affects the classroom make a difference.
4. We have power in our many voices.
5. Writing a letter is powerful but slow.
6. Mass email of identical messages is not effective.
7. Be careful your message doesn’t backfire on you.

CLTA News

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In ACTFL Central

By Lorraine D'Ambruoso

One of my visits to the ACTFL Exhibits was to their store. There, I found two books that may be of interest.

The first is *Millenials & K-12 Schools: Educational Strategies for a New Generation*, by Neil Howe and William Strauss. Neil was one of ACTFL's most impressive recent keynote speakers, and I had already read and enjoyed *Millenials Rising: The Next Great Generation*, by the same authors. So the new book caught my attention. In her foreword, Jane Strauss, member of the Fairfax County School Board, states that "Understanding generations can give us the 'big picture' perspective to make sense of ... trends" such as professional learning communities, new technologies, and data-driven decision-making, transparency and assessment." This is a fascinating read about students who are "pressured and programmed, ... networked to their friends," who "want structure and instant feedback and...fear risk and dread failure."

Another book that caught my eye is *The Five-Minute Linguist: Bite-Sized Essays on Language and Languages* edited by E M Rickerson and Barry Hilton. We are language professionals, so we are obviously interested in language. Some examples of the esoteric questions this book addresses are:

- Whatever happened to Esperanto?
- Is Swahili the language of Africa?
- How different are Spanish and Portuguese?
- How can you keep languages in a museum?
- How does the brain cope with multiple languages?

These are not treatises, but are rather teasers, and some of them will make you think. I am enjoying these two books, and hope that some of you will as well.