ON THE NET

Foreign Language Teacher Education Resources

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When one talks about teacher education one must also, of necessity, include professional development. Teacher education does not end with the conferring of the degree; it must continue throughout the teacher’s professional career or we will have instructors who are out of touch with their discipline. In essence, teacher education subsumes both preservice and inservice teachers, and this is particularly germane to foreign language (FL) teacher education. Second language acquisition is clearly an ongoing process, one that rarely -- if ever -- ends, if only because the languages and cultures we study are constantly evolving. The acquisition of professional knowledge and abilities is also a continuing process; successful teachers perpetually hone their skills and acquire new talents for use in the classroom.

To accomplish this continuing renewal, FL teachers need to remain current with research in the field and trends in methodology and instruction, and to be reflective practitioners who think about their work. How to do this when one is either busy preparing to enter the teaching profession or, equally as busy, teaching on a daily basis with many students and language lessons to juggle? Having useful FL resources easily available can facilitate professional development of both the preservice and the inservice FL teacher. This column will examine a few sites that are designed for FL educators and serve as vehicles for both teacher education and professional development.

The ERIC Clearinghouse for Languages and Linguistics or ERIC/CLL is one such useful and easily available resource for FL educators. As stated on their Web site, ERIC/CLL is operated by the Center for Applied Linguistics, a private non profit organization. The Clearinghouse collects and disseminates information on current developments in education research, instructional methods and materials, program design and evaluation, teacher training, and assessment in the following areas:

- Foreign languages
- English as a second or foreign language
- Bilingualism and bilingual education
- Psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics
- Theoretical and applied linguistics
- Intercultural communication and cultural education
- Study abroad and international exchange
While the ERIC/CLL site is extensive, in this column we will concentrate on those resources that are most directly involved with teacher education and professional development. First is the ERIC/CLL Resource Guides Online series that includes Internet Resources for Foreign Language Teachers. This comprehensive site offers links to the following FL teaching resources, some of which are created by ERIC though others are available from other sources:

- **ERIC Digests**: brief summaries of the latest hot topics dealing with FL learning and instruction written by recognized specialists in the field, including a specific section devoted to Professional Development
- **ERIC/CLL Resource Guides Online**: other ERIC series on related topics including Immersion, Bilingualism, and Early language learning
- **Annotated Bibliographies**: these minibibs are short bibliographies of recent research and articles dealing with a wide range of current issues in FL learning
- **Other ERIC/CLL Publications**: email newsletters (such as Language Link), bulletins, and even a publication for parents dealing with early language learning questions;
- **Online Journals and Newsletters**: additional resources not directly affiliated with ERIC/CLL including Language Learning and Technology
- **Listserves**: online discussion forums of interest to FL teachers, such as FLTEACH (Foreign Language Teaching Forum) and LLTI (Language Learning Technology International), with directions on how to subscribe
- **Web Sites**: certainly not exhaustive but a very good place to start
- **National, Regional, and Language-Specific Organizations of Language Teachers, and Foreign Language Resource Centers**: contact information and, in many cases, specific missions and areas of focus
- **Conferences**: some limited information on annual FL conferences
- **ERIC Documents**: a helpful illustration of what can be available from a search of the ERIC database of educational documents, including information about how to then obtain copies of documents identified through the search process

Language Link, mentioned above, frequently publishes articles that deal directly with teacher education and professional development. Issues are available back through June of 1999 and are definitely worth a perusal. For example, in March of 2002, the feature article, Foreign Language Teaching Methods Online: ACTFL’s New Course, detailed this valuable resource for both preservice and inservice teachers who may not have had a methods course specifically for FL educators. The June issue of Language Link offers a feature article on Bilingual Career Ladder Programs: An Answer to the ESL Teacher Shortage? It is a thought-provoking piece for anyone considering entering this area of the FL education field as a new or veteran FL teacher.

The last offering of ERIC/CLL that we will mention here is an extensive article by Lily Wong Fillmore and Catherine E. Snow entitled What Teachers Need to Know about Language. It is the result of a special project funded by a U.S. Department of Education initiative. Any preservice or inservice FL teacher should read this article and ponder the ideas therein. Additional commentary on the paper’s implications for early childhood educators, as well as three ERIC Digests on the topic, are also provided.

The ERIC/CLL site is a great benefit for preservice and inservice FL teachers as well as anyone else interested in the issues involved in foreign and second language learning.
and instruction. We encourage you to take an in-depth look at this marvelous resource and to take advantage of the valuable professional support it offers.

We briefly mention two additional sites below because they were specifically developed for use in preservice FL teacher education and represent an interactive use of the Web to actively involve the future teacher through the manipulation of the lesson content. However, these lesson can also be of use to the inservice teacher population in FL and, indeed, in general. At any rate, they were created by one of the authors of this column (J. LeLoup) and are freely available for those who wish to use them.

### A Communications Technology Module for the Foreign Language Methods Course

A Communications Technology Module for the Foreign Language Methods Course presents a basic introduction to essential communications technologies that FL teachers should be familiar with and know how to use. This module provides definitions, explanations, and practical application scenarios and activities to demystify this technology and make it accessible to educators. Because it was created with preservice teachers in mind, a pedagogy section proffers thought-provoking questions one should explore when contemplating the use of technology in a particular activity. The module also offers sample lesson plans using these technologies with a view toward helping FL teachers integrate this knowledge into their curriculum. The lessons are Standards-based and are centered around specific technologies.

### ESL/LEP Module

The second site is foreign language-related but simultaneously targets preservice teachers across disciplines. The ESL/LEP Module was created as a drop-in component to be used in all teacher education programs at the State University of New York Cortland in partial fulfillment of a New York State Department of Education mandate for all teacher candidates to heighten their awareness of the needs of English as a Second Language/Limited English Proficiency students. This module includes several activities and assignments, some general and some discipline-specific, that aim to give preservice teachers a better understanding of the issues involved in teaching ESL/LEP students in any content area. Video clips are used to (a) simulate immersion in a class where course content is taught in another language and (b) reveal the ESL/LEP students perspective on several critical questions that arise concerning teaching methodologies and practices in classes with an ESL/LEP population.
These pedagogical resources for teachers illustrate two of the principal advantages of Web materials as components of any course of training, whether university-based or individual and independent. The first advantage is fast, easy access to current, pertinent information in order to answer questions and offer solutions to problems. The Web thus becomes a virtual library allowing the preservice or inservice teacher to quickly locate and access documents that would otherwise not be available or that may only be found via a trip to a library that may be miles away, a significant hardship for the teacher facing considerable time constraints. Generally speaking, these documents can be deemed traditional in that they resemble the typical printed page. The advantage of the Web, therefore, is access.

The second advantage of the Web is the possibility of using the power of the computer to implement an interactive, multimedia presentation that can support realistic simulations providing material that the teacher can manipulate. This can make for a much richer learning experience than a more traditional "page-turner" type presentation in which the information is displayed essentially as it would be in a book. The manipulation, designed to imitate the experience of active involvement in the learning process that one normally associates with work in a classroom environment, is a powerful feature that would be impossible to reproduce without the aid of the computer. The ERIC Clearinghouse for Languages and Linguistics site and the Communications Technology Module for the Foreign Language Methods Course and ESL/LEP Module are useful tools for the Foreign Language professional and interesting samples of the potential of the Web as an instructional medium.