



# LINGO

Pacific Northwest Council  
for Languages  
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## Great Potential for Languages in 2005

*By Barbara Rupert, 2004-05 PNCFL President*



I remember feeling sheepish when I was first elected to the board of the Washington Association of Language Teaching in 1998 and PNCFL was being discussed at meetings, because I didn't even know what it was, exactly. I had been a teacher in the region for fourteen years and gone to several PNCFL spring conferences but had never really understood the function of our regional organization. Thanks to Sonja Hokanson, who was Washington's PNCFL representative at the time, I came to appreciate all of the important work performed by the Pacific Northwest Council for Languages.

Now, many years later, I have the privilege of serving as President of PNCFL. Our organization, the first regional language association in the country, has gone through some major transformations, especially over the past several years. It seems important to share with language educators, who may be as unsure as I was, what we are all about.

At our annual meeting this fall, the PNCFL board worked on articulating our mission, vision, and goals to help make our work more visible. Each member of our state organizations pays dues to PNCFL and deserves to know how that money is used. PNCFL is only worthy and viable if it serves a meaningful purpose for our members.

As you read our mission and vision statements below, please consider whether they fit your expectations for PNCFL and let us know. We are here to serve you and want to be responsive to the variety of needs of language educators in our member states. Please feel free to contact me at [brupert@fp.k12.wa.us](mailto:brupert@fp.k12.wa.us) with your feedback.

I invite you to go to our Web site at <http://babel.uoregon.edu/pncfl> to learn more about how we are bringing our vision to life by means of collaboration and political advocacy through

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JNCL-NCLIS; Professional Assistance Workshops (PAWS); the Western Initiative for Language Leadership (WILL); and Intercom, a free service provided by the Center for Applied Second Language Studies that allows educators to receive language- and region-specific information on a wide variety of topics.

Many of our efforts will also be enhanced by the 2005 Year of Languages (YOL) campaign to celebrate the benefits and value of language learning. The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) has organized special themes and activities for each month. Please visit ACTFL's Web site at <http://www.actfl.org> for each month's emphasis.

YOL is a great opportunity to bring attention to the value of languages and is one of PNCFL's top priorities this year. In addition, we will be working on our State PNCFL Committees to get more people involved in our efforts. Please see our Web site for more information about state committees.

There is a need for both new and experienced educators to participate. Our third priority for the year is improving communication with our members. I hope this issue of *Lingo* will be a good first step in communicating the purposes and activities of PNCFL.

I hope the New Year generates many exciting opportunities for you to use your languages and bring languages to life for others! Peace and joy be yours.

### ***Pacific Northwest Council for Languages Mission Statement***

The Pacific Northwest Council for Languages unites, serves, and supports all world language educators in Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington, and Wyoming.

### ***Pacific Northwest Council for Languages Vision Statement***

PNCFL believes all students should be proficient in more than one language and the languages' cultures. Learners' ability to be proficient is directly impacted by the quality of education that they receive. As a result, PNCFL advocates for the value of world languages as a core curriculum and supports language policies that reflect this ideal. In order to foster professional growth among language educators, PNCFL connects them to one another and to those at the national level. Furthermore, PNCFL inspires world language educators to improve instruction for all students through professional development and leadership opportunities.



Articles with  the above ribbon indicate submissions from participants of the Western Initiative Language for Leadership (WILL), sponsored by the Center for Applied Second Language Studies (CASLS) in collaboration with the Pacific Northwest Council for Languages (PNCFL).

WILL is a professional development program designed to meet the needs of rural language educators in the Pacific Northwest. If you are interested in participating in this one-of-a-kind professional development opportunity, apply online at <http://casls.uoregon.edu/willapp/>.



# Speak It and They WILL Learn

By Jennifer Mayfield

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*Jennifer Mayfield teaches Spanish at Chugiak High School in Eagle River, Alaska. Jennifer is a participant of the Western Initiative for Language Leadership (WILL). In this article, Jennifer discusses her action research project.*

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I've read the research on how crucial it is to use the target language in language classes. I know that the more I speak, the more my students will learn. However, why is it that I struggle with staying in the language in my level 1 and 2 Spanish classes but have no problem in the upper level classes? This is a question I've been asking myself for years, and, as a participant in the Western Initiative for Language Leadership (WILL) program, I was given the necessary tools to conduct teacher action research that gave me a new perspective on my dilemma.

As I reflected on my level 1 classes, I estimated that I used English 60% of the time and Spanish only 40%. Why did I so often resort to using English when I knew it contradicted what the research said? These are the reasons I came up with.

- If I only used the target language:
- the students would “zone out.”
  - they would get frustrated and drop the class.
  - their anxiety levels would increase and impede their learning.
  - I wouldn't be able to cover all of the material I needed to get through since I would spend so much time explaining and re-explaining.

After learning about teacher-action research during a WILL summer

institute, I chose to research how students would react to a level 1 class taught almost entirely in Spanish. I had three sections of Spanish 1, and I was going to use the target language almost exclusively in all of them.

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***At the end of the period, as the students exited, I heard comments such as, “I don't think she speaks English.”***

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The first day of school was the beginning of my research, and I spoke only Spanish in my level 1 classes. I made my input as comprehensible as possible by using gestures, visuals, and cognates. I waited for the tempers to flare and the foul words to fly, but, to my amazement, everyone in the class was able to follow my directions and keep up with what was happening. The students seemed fairly calm. At the end of each period, as the students exited, I heard comments such as, “I don't think she speaks English” or “Did she just get here from Mexico or something?” But I didn't hear anything negative. When the final bell rang at the end of the day, I was proud of my accomplishment and felt I had started the year off on a positive note. However, I also noticed that I was completely exhausted. It took a lot of energy to make myself understood. As I reflected on how I felt physically, it occurred to me that that was another reason I had difficulty staying in the language: it was tiring!

The next day, I let the students in on a secret: I can speak English. They

seemed extremely relieved. I explained to them that I was going to speak in Spanish the majority of the time but that I would signal to them when I was about to change languages. I did this by having a sign at the front of the room that had “Spanish” written on one side and “English” on the other. I would turn the sign to correspond with the language I was currently using.



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***The surveys and interviews helped me gain perspective on how the students were feeling about the classes...***

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I then went on to discuss the language learning process in simple terms and explained that, in order for them to be able to speak Spanish, they had to hear it. We also spent a lot of time brainstorming and talking about listening strategies. They kept this list in their notebook, and we posted them in the classroom. I now felt they were well equipped to handle unfamiliar language situations in the class.

As the days and weeks passed, the students adjusted fairly well to the amount of Spanish I used. Sometimes they would beg me to speak in English, but, unless we were discussing learning strategies or something of a serious nature, I stayed in Spanish. However, when I did need to use English briefly and I headed towards the board to flip the sign, I

could hear a sigh of relief echo across the room. Students really looked forward to those moments!

An important element of teacher research is data collection, and I collected data related to my research by keeping a reflective journal, administering student surveys to my level 1 and 3 classes, conducting personal student interviews, and videotaping myself. In the journal, I jotted down what was going well, how I was feeling about the research, and my personal attitudes and beliefs. The surveys and interviews helped me gain perspective on how the students were feeling about the classes, and I used the videotape to help me recognize triggers that made me slip into English. However, the most useful data was obtained through the surveys. Below is a sampling of the questions I asked and students' results.

**Spanish 1 survey questions:**

*Thinking back to the first day of school and other times when only Spanish was spoken by the teacher, were you able to follow along and understand the majority of what was happening in class?*

Out of sixty-two students surveyed, fifty-five said yes, they understood and could follow along. Seven said no, they could not.

*How do you feel about the amount of Spanish I use during class?*

Out of sixty-two students, ten said I used too much Spanish, five said not enough, and forty-seven said I used the right amount.

*If you could change your schedule today, no questions asked and with no penalty, would you drop Spanish?*

Fifty-one students said they would stay, and eleven said they would drop.

I also gave surveys to my level 3 classes to get information about their previous Spanish classes. The questions that had the most impact on my research results were the following:

*Estimate how often your Spanish 1 and 2 teachers spoke English.*

Fifteen said often, and eight said sometimes.

*If you had a choice, how much English would you have preferred that those teachers used in class?*

Three students said they wished their teachers had used more English and less Spanish. Twenty said they wished their teachers had spoken more Spanish and less English.

When I interviewed students personally, I received the same feedback. They agreed that it was more challenging when the class was taught almost entirely in Spanish, but they understood the benefits and felt that they learned more.

At the end of the year, after compiling the data and reflecting on my research, I came to some conclusions. These are only my personal observations.

- I noticed that students started speaking spontaneously earlier than previous classes I had taught where I had difficulty staying in the target language.
- Sometimes I had to be very creative in order to make myself understood without reverting into English, especially with difficult tasks such as giving directions for games or crafts.
- I had a tendency to resort to English when I was overtired or sick.

- At the end of the year, it was harder to stay in the target language and the students noticed.



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***[The students] agreed that it was more challenging when the class was taught almost entirely in Spanish, but they understood the benefits and felt that they learned more.***

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- Students actually preferred that the class be taught almost exclusively in Spanish, even though they were sometimes frustrated.
- It's worth the extra effort and energy to create an atmosphere of immersion in the class.
- It's extremely important to teach good listening strategies and to review them often.
- Covering the material is not as important as providing the students with ample comprehensible input.
- The students will rise to your expectations if you equip them with the knowledge and tools necessary to do so.

Conducting this research project had a tremendous impact on me as a teacher and dramatically changed the way I conduct level 1 classes. However, the most important thing I learned from my research is that IF YOU SPEAK IT THEY WILL LEARN!

# Why You Should Attend ACTFL

*By Greg Hopper-Moore, PNCFL Executive Director*

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*Greg Hopper-Moore is the newly appointed Executive Director of PNCFL. A French teacher for ten years, Greg spent a year and a half in Cameroon. He is currently the Research and Development Director for the Center for Applied Second Language Studies (CASLS) at the University of Oregon.*

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For me, going to the ACTFL Annual Convention and Expo was like going to Disneyland. Sure, there weren't any amusement rides, but there was a sense of pageantry and a contagious energy exuding from all corners of the convention center as people joined together to celebrate the best in the profession.

The sheer size of the one and only national foreign language conference is a sight to behold. The Chicago Hilton was the backdrop for this year's convention, and the facilities were stunning. The size of a convention does not always indicate its quality, but, in this case, there is much to be gained by bringing together so many language teachers and professionals.

On the eve of the Year of Languages, there is a desire to promote second language instruction across the nation. Second language teachers believe deeply in the value of what they do every day in the classroom. The goal of the Year of Languages is to share that value with the rest of the nation and to help the nation realize the importance of learning a second language.

In case you haven't noticed, second language teachers tend to be an impassioned group of people. We have worked hard to acquire proficiency in another language, and we strive to pass

on our love of a language to the next generation of speakers and readers. Though our methods and teaching practices differ from one classroom to the next, we share the joy of watching students make progress.

This passion for languages was evident in each of the sessions I attended. Whether the session was designed to share insights about a particular aspect of language instruction or to communicate the results of a research study, each session communicated a deep desire to see the profession furthered.

If you have ever been to a conference and been disappointed by the limited number of sessions in your interest area, this will not be the case at ACTFL. The question at ACTFL is not whether you will be able to find an interesting session but how to choose

**Teaching & Learning**  
A SALUTE TO FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATORS



**SWCOLT/TFLA Joint Conference**  
**OMNI Mandalay**  
**Irving, Texas**  
**April 7-10, 2005**

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