



# LINGUA FRANCA

A Bi-Annual Newsletter Published by the Department  
of Foreign Languages at Salem State College  
<http://www.salemstate.edu/languages/linguafranca.htm>

## THE BIRTH AND DEATH OF LANGUAGES

### THE WORLD'S LANGUAGES ARE RAPIDLY DISAPPEARING

BY DR. JON ASKE, FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Language is a fascinating thing. It is an important part of what makes us human. Animals may be able to communicate simple messages to each other—and to us—but what animal could ever communicate a complex thought such as the one expressed in this very sentence?

Although someone once said that “it often shows an excellent command of language to say nothing,” life without speaking is hardly imaginable. Even the deaf have something totally analogous to spoken language: sign language. We use language for everything in our lives. It is even hard to imagine thinking without language, though there is no doubt that some forms of thinking do not require language (Kelly Fordyce once

said that language “can be used to express thoughts, to conceal thoughts, but more often, to replace thinking”; think about it.)

The type of language that humans speak today must have developed along with our humanness, so that we can assume there has been language as long as there

have been homo sapiens like us, that is at least 100,000 years. Of course, we have no idea what people spoke then and the first language, if there was only one first language, will always remain a mystery. After all, human written records of any kind barely go be-

yond the last 5,000 years, for writing is a superimposed accessory on spoken language, which is the real thing, as any linguist will tell you.

Whether it all started with one single language 100,000 years ago, now there are many languages in the world. Would you believe there are anywhere between three and six thousand? Considering that there are less than two hundred states represented at the United Nations, it doesn't take a math degree to figure out that multilingual nations must be the norm in the world

But why can't linguists tell us the exact number of languages there are, something like 4,593 or 5,602? And how did so many languages come to be out of that single initial language?

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**“Anywhere between 50 and 90% of all six thousand languages spoken today will disappear by the end of the 21st century.”**

## SALEM'S FRENCH-CANADIAN CONNECTIONS

BY DR. ELIZABETH BLOOD, FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Although the city of Salem is most well-known for its colonial settlers, sea captains and literary figures, it has also welcomed several waves of immigrants who have brought cultural and linguistic diversity to its streets. One of the first immigrant groups to populate the city were French-Canadian immigrants who started coming to Salem in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century to work in its leather and shoe factories. By the year 1900, French-Canadians made up 20% of the city's population, and Salem

was one of a handful of U.S. cities dubbed a “Little Canada”.

Over the past century, the Franco-American population in Salem has declined. However, we still see evidence of this history

in the city of Salem—in the names of its businesses, in its churches and buildings, and in the names of many local families, Salem State College employees and students—and new connections between French-speaking Canada and Salem are emerging at Salem State.

Among the faculty at Salem State, there are numerous professors with connections to Québec. Professors Edward Desmarais (Management) and Nancy Schultz

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Québec - Hôtel de Frontenac

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### DID YOU KNOW?

- ◇ In the year 1900, Franco-Americans comprised 20% of the population of the City of Salem.
- ◇ In the year 2000, Hispanics/Latinos comprised 11% of the population of the City of Salem and 25% of the public school population.
- ◇ Today, 20 different native languages are spoken by students at Salem State.



## TEACHER TEST PREP WORKSHOP!

Are you worried about the Teacher Test in Spanish? Are you looking for ways prepare for it? Have you been unsuccessful with it in the past? Come to the Teacher Test Preparation Workshop on October 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2004, from 9:00AM to 12:00PM in Sullivan Building 204. You will receive guidance as to the format and content of the test, as well as helpful hints to prepare for the test. The cost is \$25.00 for Salem State College students or alumni and \$50.00 for others. See Dr. Nicole Sherf to sign up for the workshop. For more information or to download the registration form, go to: [www.salemstate.edu/languages/teacherstestworkshop.htm](http://www.salemstate.edu/languages/teacherstestworkshop.htm). ■

## COME TO THE 2004 ANNUAL MASSACHUSETTS FOREIGN LANGUAGE ASSO- CIATION (MAFLA) CONFERENCE!

The three-day Conference in Sturbridge offers sessions on a variety of foreign language teaching issues as well as opportunities for collaboration with current foreign language teachers. Future foreign language educators will benefit tremendously from the experience:

- Attend a workshop or session to get creative ideas for your Education courses or your student teaching.
- Browse the exhibit hall for teaching ideas, travel opportunities, study abroad programs, textbook possibilities.
- Meet interesting and creative foreign language educators from around the state.
- Give your résumé a boost by including this great professional development opportunity.

For more information, or to download a brochure, go to [www.mafla.org/conf2004.htm](http://www.mafla.org/conf2004.htm) or speak with Dr. Sherf (SB 204A, 542-6468 or [nsherf@salemstate.edu](mailto:nsherf@salemstate.edu))

## ¿QUÉ PASA? QUOI DE NEUF? DEPARTMENT NEWS ABOUNDS

BY DR. JON ASKE

Another school year has started at Salem State College and we are all already in the swing of things.

Well, not exactly all. One of us is not really here. Just like Dr. Serra last semester, now it is the turn of the Department's chairperson, Dr. Kristine Doll, to be on sabbatical. During part of the semester she will be in Spain conducting research.

successful month-long program for French in Quebec. Pictures of both summer programs can be seen at our website. Learn more about the Quebec program in this newsletter's feature on Salem's French-Canadian connections.

Also, to encourage foreign study, the Center for International Education at Salem State College is offering two open houses in November,

Spanish (see pg. 5) the Test de Français International (TFI) in the Spring. For more information visit our website or contact Dr. Serra or Dr. Blood (respectively).

What with Dr. Doll on sabbatical and new courses being added, this semester we have a large number of adjunct faculty in the department. Say hi to them when you see them in the hallways. They are: Spanish: Rita Carter, Gregory Flynn, Marilyn Glazer-Weiner, Bernice Mitchell, and Guadalupe Pierce; French: Sofya Vinokur and Brigitte Lagoutte; Italian: Rayanne Menery; and Spanish and Italian: Ernesto Oregel.

If you have visited the Language Resource Center (Language Lab) this semester you will have noticed that it has 11 brand-new computers. The Department of Foreign Languages is also in the process of acquiring more foreign language films. Come and take advantage of our top-notch facilities.

Foreign Language Club! Never heard of it? That's because it doesn't exist yet, but Professors Blood (French) and Echevarría-Morales (Spanish) are in the process of getting it started. As a formal club at Salem State College it will be able to obtain college funds and other such things. If you are interested in



*Some Spanish majors at graduation and one who can't wait to be next. From left to right: Patricia Bradford, Michael Skorker (not graduating), Jacqueline Rodas, Maura Harrington and Diana Buccella*

The traditional French and Spanish movie nights at the Language Resource Center have given way this semester to a combined Foreign Film Series which will be shown at the MLK Room in the Campus Center. See details on page 4.

Study abroad is an integral part of serious foreign language study and the Department of Foreign Languages continues to foster such studies. In addition to our own month-long program at the University of Oviedo in Spain, soon we hope to be able to sponsor an inexpensive high-quality semester-long program at the same location. Meanwhile this past summer we offered a highly

one for our summer language programs and a more general study abroad open house. See details on page 3.

If even a month is too difficult for you to get away, you might be interested in the Department of Geography's trip to Portugal during Spring Break (see pg. 3). Visit this wonderful, little known destination if you can.

For those who would like to assess and obtain a certification of their Spanish and French language abilities, the department will offer internationally recognized tests: the DELE for



*You can tell Carmen Pittella and Rose Smith are two happy graduates*

getting involved, get in touch with Professors Blood or Echevarría-Morales. ■

## TRAVEL ABROAD!

Two events will take place in early November at the Center for International Education (CIE) in 8 Harrison Rd (the second green house on the right after you turn into South Campus). For more information contact Fátima Serra (fatima.serra@salemstate.edu) or CIE: (978) 542-7105.

### Study Abroad Open House

Find out about different programs and talk to students who have gone abroad

November 3, 2004 3-5pm

### Oviedo/Quebec Information Session

Earn six credits in the summer in Spain or in Quebec!

November 8, 3-5pm



*Travel abroad!  
What are you waiting for?  
You'll never regret it,  
you'll never forget it.*

### Travel to Lisbon, Portugal, during Spring Break

March 12-19, 2005 Just \$980!  
Space is limited! Trip includes:  
Round-trip airfare, 6 nights in a  
three-star hotel, and airport  
transfers. For more info visit:  
[http://www.dgl.salemstate.edu/  
dept/lisbon.htm](http://www.dgl.salemstate.edu/dept/lisbon.htm)

## SALEM'S FRENCH-CANADIAN CONNECTIONS

*(Continued from page 1)*  
(English) and myself are three of many faculty, administrators and staff on campus who are descended from French-Canadian immigrants. For Prof. Desmarais, it was his great grandparents who immigrated to the U.S. in the late 19<sup>th</sup>-century. He spoke French as a very young child at home, but quickly switched to English as his dominant language when he started school. Like many of French-Canadian heritage, Desmarais feels that his family is fully American and more rooted in New England than in any foreign culture.

Similarly, my family and the family of Prof. Schultz also quickly became Americanized. My grandmother, Bernadette Plouffe, immigrated from Montréal to the U.S. around 1918 and married an American. She and my father often returned to Québec for holidays and vacations, and we still have many relatives who live there, but French stopped being spoken as a native language in our family after my father's generation. Prof. Schultz's family history is similar. Her grandfather, Lorenzo Lusignan, immigrated from the Montréal area to New England in 1906. Like me, Schultz learned more French in school than at home, but her academic interest in French (she double-majored in French and English in college) likely stems from her family heritage, as did mine.

Immigration out of Québec has slowed tremendously in the past several decades, especially since the cultural and political revival of Franco-phone Québec in the 1960's.

Nonetheless, there are a few native Quebecois among us. Professors Daniel Marien (Political Science) and Anne-Marie Harris (Management) are both natives of Montréal and speak French as a native language. Marien, who came to the U.S. as a student in 1985, maintains strong ties with his family and friends in Québec. He speaks French regularly with them...and with his cat. Harris, who moved to the U.S. in 1983, also for college, finds she speaks French less often now, but is very proud of her French-Canadian heritage. Both have been at Salem State since 2001.



*French-Canadian immigrant family in New England at the turn of the 20th century*

While there are many stories of Quebecois moving to New England, there are now many stories of New Englanders—specifically students from Salem State College—living in Québec. This past summer was the first for the new French Summer Program in Québec. Ten students from Salem State College participated in the five-week program located at the Université Laval, just outside Québec City. While students praised their teachers, French classes and the many lively activities organized on campus at Laval, they were equally impressed by the city of Québec and its people. “What enchanted me most,” said Political Science

major Carlos Camelo, “was the city. It's like being in Europe...just closer to home! Also the people were very, very nice!” The Summer Program, which takes place in July, begins at the time of the annual music festival in Québec called the Festival d'été. Students from Salem State appreciated the concerts, the restaurants and learning about a different culture. Kate Stephens, a Communications major who also participated in the program, said that immersing herself in a different culture was an exciting experience: “the language, the food, the festivals, the people,

the lifestyle...I'll have awesome memories of an amazing place for the rest of my life!” Of the students interviewed, all said they would recommend the program to others. “It is very valuable to experience another culture” said Satomi Nishino, Geography major. “I would recommend this to every student,” said History major Chris De-

metrules, who stressed the importance of meeting people from different backgrounds, “Step outside your comfortable box and discover a different point of view.” Jennifer Sheehan, a Nursing major, said “You will never forget the experience and you will have the time of your life learning French!”

If you want to make your own French-Canadian connections by participating in the French Summer Program in Québec next summer, contact Prof. Blood in the Department of Foreign Languages or visit the Center for International Education to pick up a brochure. A whole different world awaits you, just a day's drive away! ■



## THE BIRTH AND DEATH OF LANGUAGES

(Continued from page 1)

The fact is that each thing that we may call a language is hardly a homogeneous thing. We tend to think of language as homogeneous because we are speakers of languages that have been fixed in writing and have one single "correct" form, which is a very recent phenomenon. 'In nature' languages display much dialectal variation from one region to another where the language is spoken. For many languages it may be quite hard for speakers of one dialect to understand those of another dialect. So, are these two ways of speaking really dialects of each other or perhaps different languages? That's where it gets tricky. The decision is often not objective, but subjective.

We find examples of this in familiar Europe. Northern and southern dialects of Italian are quite different (of course in the last century standard Italian spread through education, but that's a very recent phenomenon), but we think of these as dialects of the same language, Italian, because Italy is a single country. On the other hand, someone from Denmark who only speaks Danish can communicate quite easily with someone from Sweden who only speaks Swedish. Danish and Swedish are closely related languages, but because they are spoken in different countries people think of them as different languages. You can emphasize or deemphasize the differences and similarities between forms of speech. Thus what's a language and what's a dialect is to a large extent an arbitrary and subjective matter, not something that can be objectively defined.

The other question is how come there are so many languages today when presumably there used to be only one to begin with. Much like in the case of biological evolution, that is

due to the fact that languages change through time, even if the changes are imperceptible to its speakers. Slowly but surely, everything changes: the sounds, the grammar, the words, everything. (Having a fixed standard form, which as we saw is a relatively recent phenomenon, can slow down change, but not prevent it completely.) A language can change so much in a thousand years that speakers of a language traveling back through time would not be able to understand their ancestors. The English of 1,000 years ago would be as foreign to us as modern German. A language can change so much in 10,000 years that even a linguist might not recognize that one language descended from or is related to another. So what does that have to do with the number of languages? Simple. As a population speaking a language split geographically through migration, their speech changed in different ways from each other. This is similar to the process of speciation through evolution, it just happens to languages much faster. That's what happened to English and Dutch and German, which 2,000 years ago were dialects of the same language. The same thing happened in the lands of what used to be the Roman Empire and where Latin, the language of the Romans, was spoken. Latin gave birth to Portuguese, French, Spanish, Italian, Catalan, etc., through changes that took place in the Middle Ages, when communications were poor between different regions of what had been the Roman Empire.

And that's how some 6,000 languages developed through time, perhaps from a single language, though that we can never know for sure. However, history is changing dramatically and the prospects

for most of these languages is bleak. We are all familiar with the fact that plant and animal species are disappearing, but that is small potatoes compared to the extinction rate of languages. In this age of globalization, modernization, travel, global communications, and discriminatory practices of powerful nation-states, the majority of those languages—between 50 and 90% according to different estimates—will disappear by the end of this century. That's because most of these languages are spoken by relatively few people. According to the Foundation for Endangered Languages, "52% are spoken by fewer than 10,000 people; 28% by fewer than 1,000." On the other hand, "10 major languages, each spoken by over 109 million people, are the mother tongues of almost half ... of the world's population." According to a recent source, "the 12 most widely spoken languages, with approximate numbers of native speakers, are as follows: Mandarin Chinese, 836 million; Hindi, 333 million; Spanish, 332 million; English, 322 million; Bengali, 189 million; Arabic, 186 million; Russian, 170 million; Portuguese, 170 million; Japanese, 125 million; German, 98 million; French, 72 million; Malay, 50 million." It should be noted that "if second-language speakers are included in these figures, English is the second most widely spoken language, with 418 million speakers."

Although one can think of the advantages of there being less languages in the world, such as easier communication, many minority language speakers and concerned scholars decry the loss of languages which are the vehicles of

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### "El amor"

De haber sabido que me amabas,  
habría escalado todas las montañas  
del mundo para besarte  
para sentir el calor de tus labios  
para mirar en tus ojos  
y darme cuenta de que  
no necesitaba nada más en el mundo.

de haber sentido que me amabas,  
habría volado más alto  
que los pájaros de los árboles  
que los aviones por las nubes  
que las mariposas en el cielo;  
sólo para ver tu sonrisa  
y para ofrecerte una vida  
de crecimiento y belleza.

de haber sabido que me amabas,  
habría escrito tu nombre en papel  
cuando tú no estabas conmigo  
al principio en negro,  
y después en azul  
y en rojo y verde  
en anaranjado y en marrón  
habría escrito tu nombre mil veces  
hasta que volvieras.

de haber sabido que me amabas,  
habríamos pasado todas nuestras  
vidas juntos  
hasta que Dios nos separara  
y no habría sentido ningún  
arrepentimiento del pasado.

Michael Skorker

### FOREIGN FILM SERIES AT SALEM STATE COLLEGE

The Department of Foreign Languages is happy to announce its new Foreign Film Series. During the Fall Semester the following films will be shown at 6:30pm in the MLK Room of the Ellison Campus Center:

- ♦ **Sep 22:** *L'Auberge Espa-gnole* (France & Spain)
- ♦ **Oct 20:** *Bread and Tulips* (Italy)
- ♦ **Nov 17:** *Mostly Martha* (Germany)
- ♦ **Dec 8:** *Between Pancho Villa and a Naked Woman* (Mexico)

All welcome! Free admittance!  
Free snacks!

Sponsored by the Department of Foreign Languages and the Foreign Language Club. For more information about the films, go to the following page at our site:

<http://www.salemstate.edu/languages/movienight/foreignfilmsseriesf04.htm>

## PROFILE: CATHERINE FROST, SPANISH MAT CANDIDATE

BY DR. NICOLE SHERF, FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Catherine Frost is a candidate for the MAT in Spanish, a new graduate program at Salem State. Ironically, she was also one of the first students to graduate with a Bachelor of Arts in Spanish at Salem State. Her path towards becoming a Spanish teacher has taken some unusual turns, inspired by her travels, military service, teachers, friends and her daughter.

### LF: What is your background in Spanish?

CF: I started Spanish in 8th Grade at Essex Elementary and Middle School. I did very poorly, but in high school, my first Spanish teacher really inspired my interest in the language and cultures. After graduating, I went to Westfield State College to pursue a career as a Spanish teacher. Half way through my freshman year there, I was

called to active duty from the National Guard. I went to Germany,



Catherine Frost, Candidate for the MAT in Spanish

Hungary, and the Balkans with a National Guard unit from New Mexico and Arizona. The members of the unit that I worked with taught me about the Chicano, New Mexi-

can, and Arizona cultures.

### LF: How did you end up at Salem State for your BA?

CF: I decided to take a few classes at Salem State after I got back, before returning to Westfield. I was very happy here and decided to stay, even though there was not yet an "official" program for those interested in becoming Spanish teachers. While at SSC, I was also a member of E Company, 223 Military Intelligence Battalion, serving as a Spanish Linguist. I had the opportunity to train and work with native speakers within the National Guard and the British service, and I traveled to the Defense Language Institute in Monterey, CA. I also traveled to Nicaragua to translate for a humanitarian mission to build pediatric and

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## WHAT IS THE D.E.L.E.?

BY DR. FATIMA SERRA, FOREIGN LANGUAGES

If you know Spanish but do not have a certificate to prove it... If your workplace requires a certificate of Spanish proficiency... If you want Spanish language credentials that are recognized worldwide, then the DELE exam is for you!

**What is the DELE?** The Diploma in Spanish as a Foreign Language (DELE) is granted by the Instituto Cervantes on behalf of the Spanish Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports. It offers official certification

**What is on the exam?** The examinations, offered at three levels (Inicial, Intermedio, and Superior) consist of five sections: reading comprehension, written expression, listening comprehension, grammar and vocabulary, oral expression.

**Who recognizes the DELE?** Over 20,000 people have taken the DELE exams in 50 countries and 150 cities throughout the world. The diplomas are recognized by official institutions of Spanish-speaking countries and, increasingly, by corporations, chambers of commerce, and educational institutions in the United States. Several American universities award course credit for the diplomas or require them of Spanish majors.

**Who may take the DELE exam?** Applicants must provide proof of citizenship in a country in which Spanish is not the official language (If you have a US passport, you are eligible.)

**Where can I take the DELE exam?** Right here! Salem State College has been nominated official

examination site for the DELE. We offer the exam in May. Check our website for the exact date each year!



Symbol of the DELE

**Is there training prior to the exam?** Yes! The Department of Foreign Languages is offering SPN212 in **Spring 2005** (Tuesdays 4pm; day and night students welcome!). The class is a Spanish Intermediate II level (equivalent of SPN202) with activities specifically oriented towards the exam.

For more information on the DELE course, contact Dr. Serra (fatima.serra@salemstate.edu) or see the web: <http://diplomas.cervantes.es> ■

## MAT PROGRAM INFO

BY DR. NICOLE SHERF

This fall marks the official start of the new Master of Arts in Teaching Spanish, a program designed to offer a broad range of Spanish literature, culture and language courses, as well as the Education courses needed for licensure to teach elementary (pre-K through sixth grade) or secondary (fifth through twelfth grade) Spanish in Massachusetts. Nine students have been accepted into the program to date, and there are several applications pending review. Most of the students in the program are currently teaching at area elementary, middle or high schools, and find the evening course offerings very convenient. The Coordinator of the program, Dr. Nicole Sherf is looking forward to creating a sense of community among the students through program dinners, other get-togethers, a mailing list, and a speaker series. The first MAT in Spanish Graduate course, SPN 705, *Seminars in Latin American and US Latino Literatures*, is being taught by Dr. Ana Echevarría-Morales. For more information about the program or to receive an application, please speak with Program Coordinator Dr. Nicole Sherf by phone (978-542-6468), by e-mail (nsherf@salemstate.edu) or stop by her office (SB 204A). ■



The Spanish letter ñ, symbol of the Instituto Cervantes

of competence in the Spanish language for citizens of countries in which Spanish is not the official language.



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WHEN A NEW ISSUE IS OUT  
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## FOREIGN PHOTO CONTEST!

Have you traveled to a foreign country recently? Do you have any amazing photos from your trip?

The Department of Foreign Languages will select 12 of the best foreign photos submitted for publication in a 2005 calendar. The winners will receive a free calendar with their photos and their names inside. Open to all students, faculty, staff and community members.

Send your best foreign photo, along with your name, address and a brief description of the location in the photo to: Dr. Elizabeth Blood. Deadline is: **December 1, 2004.**

## PROFILE: CATHERINE FROST, SPANISH MAT CANDIDATE

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veterinary clinics.

### LF: Have you ever done study abroad?

CF: After I graduated in 2002, I went to Asturias, Spain as part of the Oviedo Study Abroad Program at SSC. I made friends with as many people as we could, from José the man who ran the café at the school, to people in bars, restaurants, shops. I loved every minute of it there!

### LF: Why did you choose the MAT program at Salem State?

CF: I chose SSC because it is close

to home. As a new mother, being ten minutes from home is a big plus. I was very pleased with the classes I took as an undergrad and I expect the same from the graduate classes. The classes are small, the professors are interested in our personal and professional growth. Apart from the academics, I have loved being part of a hard-working student community. Despite scheduling conflicts, exhaustion and frustration, we all seem to make things work out. And I believe that we come out better people for it. The MAT also offers a great balance of educational and con-

tent classes.

### LF: What are your goals? What do you hope to do in the future?

CF: My immediate goals are to become professionally certified and to keep my job at Melrose Middle School. In the future, I plan to write a Spanish textbook for middle school teachers. I would also like to become more active in the community and volunteer. I had my first child in May and I would like her to have a strong sense of community involvement: they only way I can do that is by becoming more active myself! ■

## THE BIRTH AND DEATH OF LANGUAGES

(Continued from page 4)

unique human cultures which will soon be gone forever. All those who have seen their lives enriched by acquiring a new language and a new culture can imagine how the loss of a language can be seen as a catastrophic event.

Still, there will be plenty of languages and cultures to ac-

quire and it is important that more Americans become multilingual. The year 2005 has been designated as Year of Languages by The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. The idea is to focus and expand language education policy in the USA. We will keep you informed of this event in these pages during the year.

If you find all this fascinating and would like to learn more, there are many good books and articles out there. A particularly good one I just read this summer was written John McWhorter, professor of linguistics at UC Berkeley. It is entitled *The Power of Babel: A Natural History of Language* (Perennial, 2001, \$13.95.) ■