

# LINGUA FRANCA

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*Pacaya volcano*

## VACATION AND STUDY ADVENTURE IN GUATEMALA

By Richard Strager, Italian, Spanish, and ESL instructor

In December 2010, during the break between fall and winter semesters, I spent three enjoyable and rewarding weeks in sunny Guatemala. In addition to getting a much-needed respite from the New England winter chill, my main objective was to work on my Spanish. Fresh from teaching my first Spanish class at Salem State University in the fall of 2010, I really wanted to immerse myself in the language by taking an intensive advanced Spanish course. In Guatemala, I knew I would be able to practice Spanish on a daily basis. I also relished the opportunity to get to know someplace new. Although I have travelled all over the world, I had never been to Central America before.

Based on a friend's recommendation and a little internet research, I decided that Antigua would be the ideal place to stay and to study. It is a lovely, well-ordered colonial-style city an hour west of Guatemala City. Antigua is situated in a plain surrounded by hills on three sides and an imposing dormant volcano on the fourth. This historical, colorful city is laid

out in a grid pattern of crisscrossing idyllic cobblestone streets, oriented around a main square, Parque Central, Antigua's verdant heart and social center.

Antigua is very accommodating to foreign visitors. There are at least a dozen Spanish language schools there offering 4-6 hours a day of one-on-one instruction for \$120-180 per week. Most schools also organize daily afternoon field trips and activities for students to learn more about Antigua, Guatemalan culture and to socialize and practice their Spanish. The school I chose, Antigua Española Spanish Academy, was a perfect fit. It was centrally located, well-established, and very reasonably priced. I had read that they gave a discount to teachers and full-time students. When I inquired about this possibility, Señor Julio, the jovial owner, smiled broadly and said, "Todo es posible en Guatemala!" (Everything is possible in Guatemala).

In the end, for \$100 per week, they offered me 4 hours a day, 5 days a week of private instruction, plus cultural outings every

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*continued on page 2*



*Tikal Plaza Central*

afternoon with the other students in the school. They also found me a wonderful homestay family nearby which allowed me to practice my Spanish even more. The homestay was an additional \$80 per week which included my own room, a hot shower and three delicious home-cooked meals a day. The house was clean, spacious and well-appointed. The family was charming and remarkably warm and hospitable. Before arriving there, I was a little nervous about living in the home of a Guatemalan family. But they treated me as both a special guest and a part of their family and made me feel welcome and comfortable. I also felt privileged to learn about Guatemalan life from the inside out. We had our meals together and spoke Spanish all the time. As much as I enjoyed the school and the city and my travels around the country, the home stay turned out to be my favorite part of the whole trip.

From 8 am to 12 pm every day at Antigua's Spanish Academy, I worked with my personal instructor, Esperanza. We conversed, reviewed grammar, studied vocabulary, and read and discussed various texts. Since both of us were language teachers, we talked a lot about the best approach to teaching and learning languages. She also asked me about my own

life and told me about hers. One of Esperanza's most touching stories was about how she had survived a strong earthquake that had struck Antigua in the 1980's. She hardly spoke a word of English, which was perfect for my purposes, because all of our communication in Spanish was not only pedagogically useful but also authentic. Although some of the other teachers did use a little English with their beginning students, the school's preferred method of instruction was definitely language immersion. Most of the other students were at the beginner and advanced beginner level and they all seemed happy with their one-on-one lessons.



*homestay family in Antigua*

School trips with my fellow students took us to an organic macadamia farm, a textile museum, and a bustling local crafts market. One day, we went swimming in a natural hot spring and another day we competed in a Spanish scrabble tournament. We also took salsa lessons together a few times. All these activities allowed us to practice Spanish and were included in the price of the classes.

It was a lot of fun to be a student again. I loved being on 'the other side of the desk' for a while. The teacher tailored each lesson to my own needs and my own interests. Even though I was officially on vacation, I studied hard, did my homework seriously, practiced a lot outside of class, and in two short weeks, I completed my course and obtained a certificate in advanced Spanish.

In my final week there, I took the opportunity to get to know other parts of Guatemala such as Lago de Atitlán, a large, beautiful lake surrounded by volcanos. I climbed one of the volcanos as part of a guided tour. Volcán Pacaya had erupted only 7 months earlier and the eerie landscape was completely barren, entirely covered in hardened, ash-colored lava. It was three hours up and two and a half back down. Since most of the tour group knew little or no Spanish and our guide didn't know much



English, he asked me to translate for our group along the way. I had fun being an impromptu assistant tour guide for the day.

My last two days were spent in Tikal, in northern Guatemala, where deep in a dense rain forest, dozens of ancient Mayan temples can be found, half covered over by the jungle, some so tall, they rise majestically above and tower over the rain forest canopy. The view from the top is both dizzying and awe-inspiring. Standing atop these incredible structures built over 1,000 years ago, your mind strains to imagine how they were constructed so long ago, what the Mayans used them for, and how they have survived in tact all these years.

For anyone looking for fun, adventure and a great chance to learn Spanish or to improve your Spanish language skills, I highly recommend a visit to Guatemala. Feel free to contact me for further information about traveling and/or studying there. I can also tell you about how I ended up playing Santa Claus on Christmas Eve in a neighboring Guatemalan town, or how I saved \$2,000 by getting my tooth fixed by an Antiguan dentist. But those are other stories for another time.

More information about the school where Prof. Strager studied can be found at [spanishacademyantigua.com](http://spanishacademyantigua.com). ■

## DEPARTMENTAL NEWS

The 2010/2011 school year is drawing to a close and we are excited to announce that a total of 55 students will be graduating with MATs, BAs, and minors in foreign languages, Italian, French, or Spanish. We are proud of the hard work that these graduates have put into their educations and we wish them the best wherever they bring their language skills.

Five of our new graduates have earned the opportunity to change *studying* abroad into *working* abroad. They have been awarded grants from the Spanish and Italian governments to teach English during the next academic year in schools in the Piedmont region of Italy and various locations in northern Spain. This is an amazing opportunity to live outside the U.S. while earning money and experience. Congratulations to all and best of luck!

The department must thank Fátima Serra's work this year as acting chair. She did a great job filling in for Elizabeth Blood who was away on sabbatical. Dr. Blood returns this summer and has been reelected to another term as department chair.

## FACULTY NEWS

The spring 2011 semester has been a busy one with faculty members balancing teaching, conference presentations, publishing, and work with the community.

Recent and upcoming conferences are local, national and international. Nicole Sherf will serve as the official delegate of Massachusetts at the Joint National Committee for Languages (JNCL) and the National Council for Languages and International Studies (NCLIS) Annual Legislative Day and Delegate Assembly in Washington DC in mid-May. Give her any language policy questions you want directed to our state Senators and District 6 Representative. She also just returned from the Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages in Baltimore, MD, where she presented a session called "Advocating for an Elementary Foreign Language Program in Your District." Anna Rocca participated in two conference panels this semester. The first was at NeMLA, in New Brunswick, NJ, on April 7, entitled: "Exploration of Senses in Contemporary Francophone Women's Autobiography." The second panel, entitled "Écrits des femmes postcoloniales : le voyage imaginaire ou réel en tant qu'exploration des sentiments," will be presented on May 30 at CIÉF –Conseil International d'Études Francophones-- in Aix-en-Provence, France. Dr. Rocca will chair and present her paper entitled: "Nina Bouraoui et le voyage ontologique dans Nos baisers sont des adieux." Kristine Doll will be reading selections of her translations of August Bover's poetry at the "Gathering the Tribes" International Poetry Festival here in Salem as well as her own work at both the Massachusetts Poetry Festival (where she will chair a panel) in May 2011 and the International Poetry Festival to be held in Swansea, Wales in June 2011. She has also been invited to read her translations of Catalan poetry at the Atheneum of Barcelona.

There have also been several publications in recent months. Michele Dávila published the article "Una nueva estética de la violencia latinoamericana: *Archivo de oscuridades de*

*José E. Santos*" in the *International Journal in Humanistic Studies and Literature* as well as her first poetry book titled *Mosaicos* (Puerto Rico: Casa de los poetas, 2011). Anna Rocca has been working on chapters in two books about Assia Djébar's last autobiographical work. The first, entitled "Shame and Belonging in Assia Djébar's *Nulle part dans la maison de mon père*," will be published by Indiana University Press. The second, entitled "Assia Djébar's *Nulle part dans la maison de mon père*. Telling Her Truth and Reconfiguring the World," will be published by Women in French, an allied organization of the Modern Language Association. Furthermore, Dr. Rocca's abstract submission for a special issue on Women from the Maghreb, published by *Dalhousie French Studies* has been accepted. Her article entitled "In Search of: Essaydi's Tactile Imagery of Beauty in Space" is an interview with Moroccan artist Lalla Essaydi. Fátima Serra's chapter "*Instrucciones para salvar el mundo de Rosa Montero*" was accepted for publication in a special issue of *Letras Femeninas*, the journal of the Asociación Internacional de **Literatura y Cultura Femenina Hispánica**. Kenneth Reeds's article "Urban Pessimism and the Optimism between the Lines: Literary Latin American Cities and Roberto Bolaño's 2666" will be published in the summer edition of *Hipertexto*.

Foreign Languages has long been a university leader in community participation. This service was showcased at the university's annual Civic Engagement Festival where Kristine Doll was nominated to be one of the school's first inductees to Salem State's new Hall of Civic Engagement. Other recent activities with the local community have included Dr. Serra's coordination of a cooperation program with the Clarke Elementary and Stanley schools in Swampscott as well as her work with Dr. Dietrich from the Center for International Education to coordinate language exchange sessions between Salem State Spanish students and a delegation of 15 Mexican students from the Universidad Autónoma de Chiapas. ■

## 2011 GRADUATES

The following students will be graduating from Salem State in May 2011 with a master of arts in teaching Spanish, a bachelor of arts in Spanish, or a minor in either French, foreign languages, Italian, or Spanish:

### MASTER OF ARTS IN TEACHING SPANISH

Alison A. Carignan  
James M. Dickens  
Benjamin Gerson  
Mary E. Giordano  
Rebecca L. Martiniello  
Lindsay K. Perry  
Jennifer R. Quigley  
Linda M. Riley  
Alba C. Santana  
Kathryn R. Schulte

### SPANISH BA

Michael J. Aliberte  
Alyssa L. Barras  
Jessica L. Cox  
Daniel E. Godden  
Christine A. L'Heureux  
Kelly M. Lynch  
Gisette Polanco  
Roxana Maria Sandoval  
Nicole C. Touloupoulos

### FOREIGN LANGUAGES MINOR

Carla L. Fabian  
James Christian Hardman  
Kathryn D. O'Connell  
Jose Luiz F. Pinheiro  
Christina E. Varga  
Angela Voulgaris

### FRENCH MINOR

Rebekah A. Akusis  
Ronald Almeda  
Stephanie Rosa Anna Amore  
Megan Frances Farmer  
Erin Renee Foley  
Jessica L. Hendrick  
Diana Sadek

### ITALIAN MINOR

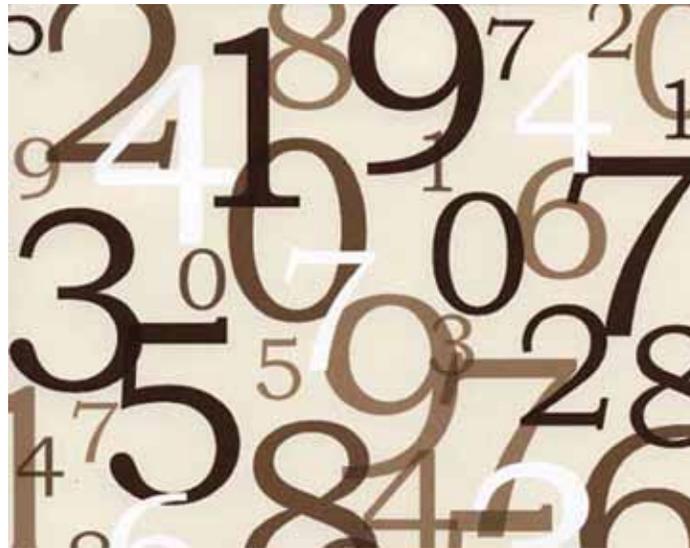
Tania Buonopane  
Angela M. Calitri  
Megan C. Carroll  
Robbin L. Crandall  
Lyndsey Hollis Frithsen  
Gisette Polanco

### SPANISH MINOR

Stephanie Rosa Anna Amore  
Alfredo Araujo  
Emely Nairobiys Arias  
Rosario Barzola  
Samantha Claire Cepican  
Patricia Y. DeLeon  
Vesmita Estime  
Joao M. Goncalves  
Corinna L. Hendrick  
Taylor N. Krajewski  
Javiera Lagunas  
Matiely Lugo  
Bethaney M. Silva  
Cora E. Stover  
Jennifer R. Surabian  
Danielle M. Thing  
Amber J. Warnick

## AND COUNTING...

By Kenneth Reeds, Foreign Languages



The United States is growing and changing. Mandated by the Constitution, the U.S. Census Bureau is charged with counting the people who live in the country. This began in 1790 when the population was 3,929,326 and has continued every ten years with the most recent survey taken in 2010 showing a population of 308,745,538. Other than demonstrating that our numbers have increased 9.7% since 2000, the 2010 census also revealed that minorities now make up 35% of the country. This changing face was reflected by the fact that Hispanics are the group which most contributed to growth:

The rise in the minority population is due to recent sharp increases in minority births, especially among Hispanics, who accounted for more than half of total U.S. population gains last year. There are now roughly 9 births for every 1 death among Latinos, compared to a roughly one-to-one ratio for whites. (Yen)

This information demonstrates that while we grow, we are also becoming something different. Minorities are increasingly less a minority. This national trend is reflected locally with the Boston Globe reporting that the "Asian and Hispanic populations both climbed 46 percent from a decade ago" in Massachusetts (Schworm and Carroll). It is, of course, natural to assume that this physical transformation of our population also influences the way we sound.

Unfortunately the census did not analyze the languages that we speak. Nevertheless, the Commonwealth Corporation published a report in March 2011 that provides a helpful portrait of the Boston area's many tongues. Their report indicated that in 2006-2008 "there were 524,451 immigrants, age 16 or older, living in the 80 towns and cities of Greater Boston" (Commonwealth Corp.) This nearly one quarter of the region's population speaks multiple mother languages with Spanish (112,995 speakers), Portuguese (46,605),

Chinese (35,266), and Vietnamese (17,408) being the four most represented. Unfortunately, the same report also indicates that only 5% of the 236,933 immigrants with "Limited English Skills" have access to English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) services. This means that

At any given point, more than 10,000 people are on waiting lists, some for as long as two years, and there are indications that thousands more are not applying for services or may not know they exist. In addition, some 6,000 new

immigrants arrive in Greater Boston every year. (Commonwealth Corp.)

These statistics paint a portrait of the Boston area as one which speaks many languages and comes from multiple countries, but that struggles to provide the services that are needed to learn English.

Taking the increase in the minority population in our region together with the dearth of ESOL services emphasizes that our small part of the country reflects national trends. Minority populations and the languages that they speak are less and less "foreign" and are increasingly a part of our national fabric. In fact, the linguistic and cultural knowledge these citizens possess is an invaluable resource. Because of this, the essentialness of providing ESOL opportunities is all the more patent - the more multilingual and pluri-cultural our society the better we relate to our world's increased interconnectivity. With this in mind, the changing face of our country also means that those of us who are born with English must expand our skills and look to some of the nation's growing languages in an effort to augment our abilities. We are, after all, a small part of a growing and changing world. ■

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Children's Buddha, close-up - Mary Ni

## FOREIGN LANGUAGES' INTERNATIONAL PHOTO CONTEST 2011

Members of the Salem State University community (students, faculty and staff) are invited to enter photographs for the International Photo Contest 2011 of the foreign languages department.

We're looking for photos that you have taken yourself during foreign travel: beautiful sights and/or interesting people. Domestic travel photos may be acceptable if the locale or the people are "exotic" enough.

Send up to two digital pictures in high quality format to Professor **Jon Aske**. **The deadline has been extended to May 8.**

Twelve photographs will be chosen to appear in a school-year paper calendar which can be purchased from the foreign languages department sometime around the end of the spring semester.

The jury will be composed of volunteer faculty, staff and students from foreign languages.

A calendar-year calendar may also be published in December for the following year with the same pictures. They make excellent holiday presents or stocking stuffers. Sometimes a larger subset of all the entries, including the 12 pictures chosen for the paper calendar, may also be published in a free computer screensaver for Windows. All entries will also appear in the international photo contest website. To view previous years' winners,

go to our departmental photo page:

<http://lrc.salemstate.edu/ip/>

The official announcement can also be seen online here with links to photos, etc.:

[salemstate.edu/academics/schools/11879.php](http://salemstate.edu/academics/schools/11879.php)

## FUTURE TEACHERS OF ITALIAN IN THE US GO TO ITALY, NOW WITH TWO DESTINATIONS

By Anna Rocca, Foreign Languages

In March of this year the Italian section of foreign languages at Salem State and the Network of Autonomous Schools of the Piedmont region, Italy, signed a second Memorandum of Understanding under the auspices of the Consulate General of Italy in Boston. The first one was signed with the Lombardy region last year. This new one in Piedmont opens a second teaching fellowship position for Salem State students of Italian.

The goal of these arrangements is to offer opportunities for language study and teacher training as well as for an understanding of Italian culture and traditions to students who are native speakers of English. This program is extremely generous, providing students with the following:

- a monthly study scholarship of net 600 Euros to assist secondary school teachers of English
- a program of study, training and intercultural experience lasting from three to eight months
- the opportunity to take courses at the local university
- the possibility to take the exam for the CELI (Certificate of Knowledge of the Italian Language), accredited by the Perugia University for Foreigners
- an extremely affordable living arrangement
- the transfer of the appropriate number of credits at Salem State, according to the hours completed in Italy



Gissette Polanco

Besides the two officially granted positions for Salem State students, one in Lombardy and one in Piedmont, next year a third will be added. Thanks to Dr. Carlo Cipollone, former Director of the Office of Education at the Consulate General of Italy in Boston, and who is now serving in Rome as the liaison to schools in Piedmont, three students will leave for Italy in October 2011. Robbin Crandall and Gissette Polanco, both minoring in Italian, have been respectively assigned to



Dean Jude Nixon, Prof. Anna Rocca, Dr. Carlo Cipollone

two prestigious schools in the city of Biella and Verona, both provinces of Piemonte. Kathryn O'Connell, minoring in foreign languages, will learn in a few weeks which city and school in Lombardy she will be teaching in.

Reflecting on her experiences up to this point and the opportunity that awaits her, Robbin Crandall briefly talked about her studies and the attractiveness Biella holds for her, her husband, and Lily:

"One of the very best things about attending Salem State University for me has been the variety of opportunities for study abroad programs in Europe. As an Italian minor, I attended a study program for a few weeks last summer in Florence, Italy, which was wonderful. This October, I am incredibly excited to have been chosen for an internship teaching English high school students in Northern Italy, all made possible by Salem State and my wonderful Italian teacher, Dr. Anna Rocca.



Robbin Crandall

My husband and I (along with Lily the Cat) will be going to a beautiful little town called Biella, in the Piedmont region, close to the France and Switzerland borders, where we will. My husband and I both look forward to experiencing the Northern Italian culture, interacting with the wonderful people of the region and learning more of the Italian language.

Unfortunately, I can't speak for Lily the Cat." ■

## DEPARTMENTAL AWARDS 2011

### EXCELLENCE

#### Arabic

Brendan Desmond

#### Chinese

Nathan Josef Jirka

#### French

Fatoumata Conte

Lydia Gravell

#### Italian

Tessa Allen

Alexander Derosa

Alexander Eisath

Molly Madigan

Tania Buonopane

#### Spanish

Chelsey Cotreau

Paul Coture

Mary Giordano

Katie Lyons

Vanessa Risti

Kaitlin Robinson

Alba Santana

Jacqueline Turner

### ACHIEVEMENT

#### Chinese

Yasmine A. Coulibaly

Yuya Suzuki

Ai Toyoda

#### French

Merrill Sunderland

#### Italian

Omega Au

David Kostos

Kathryn O'Connell

#### Spanish

Joshua Brown

Alison Carigan

Brian Kibler

Ben Naismith

Jennifer Quigley

Federica Signori

Jessica Silva

Ai Toyoda

### SERVICE

#### Italian

Tessa Allen

Diana Damon

Molly Madigan

Leanne Palma

David Kostos

#### Spanish

Tania Baez

Lauren Michalski

# THE ONE THING YOU MUST DO BEFORE YOU GRADUATE...

By Jessica Cox, Spanish Major

If you're anything like me, spending a semester abroad in a foreign country always seemed like an unreachable adventure. Sure it sounds like fun, but would I really be able to survive *alone* in a completely different culture? Well... here I am, almost three years later, ready to tell you that I did *much* more than survive. To say that I had "the experience of a lifetime" doesn't even begin to do those three months justice. My semester abroad in Barcelona, Spain taught me how to be independent, resourceful and confident.

One of the best realizations I had during that semester was on a plane ride back to Barcelona after spending the weekend in Germany. I remember looking back on the weekend and thinking to myself, "Wow... did we really just navigate around Germany with only knowing one word in German?" (Of course it was *danke*, which surprisingly got us very far sometimes.) I went with one of my new friends I met in my program. We spent the weekend jumping from bus to bus, never 100% sure we were on the right one, but always seemed to end up where we had hoped. Sitting on that plane I began to experience the indescribable feeling of being completely self-reliant. If we could make our way to the Black Forest in Germany, there's nothing we couldn't do.

Once you start to travel, you will never want to stop. In Europe, it's incredibly inexpensive and easy to fly or take a train to a different country. I remember having several conversations with my friends that sounded something like this: "So, where do you guys want to go this weekend? Paris? London? Rome?" It was that easy. Some flights were actually free! All you had to pay for was the tax, and be prepared to fly at 3AM. Anything to save money!

A semester abroad will introduce you to new cultures that you never could have imagined. You will begin to realize how exceptionally diverse people really are, and will start to appreciate them on a much greater level. One of my favorites things to do while

visiting different countries was to simply sit and "people watch." As you can imagine, the people in Italy have very different ways of physically expressing themselves than the people in Paris. These distinctive cultures made my semester nothing short of an eye opening adventure.

When diving into a new culture, you will most likely experience some degree of "culture shock." The best advice I can give you is to do your research *before* you leave the United States. Learn about their values, beliefs, customs, and above all, how they communicate. There are many aspects of culture that you will be able to learn as you go such as tasting new foods and attending various festivities. But, communication is one aspect that you do NOT want to learn as you go. Chances are it will not end well. You'd be surprised at how easy what you consider to be polite can be interpreted as rude. Not possible you think? Imagine this: You are at a local bar in Barcelona and the waiter asks you what you'd like. In your best Spanish accent, you say, "Could I have a beer please?" When he brings it to you, you are quick to say, "Thank you." With just those few words, it is very possible that you have come across as superficial. By applying our norms of politeness to a completely different culture, you would immediately stand out as a foreigner. I had the misfortune of experiencing this first hand. It took me longer than I would have liked to figure out why I was not having very friendly interactions with many people. I was coming off as "fake." To my surprise, it is considered the norm (or even polite!) to order a beer by simply saying, "Give me a beer." Can you imagine? It still seems so rude to me! The differences in cross-cultural communication are endless. Much like this situation, you probably won't even know you're doing something wrong. The bottom line: if you're looking to get everything out of your experience abroad, it would be in your best interest to not unintentionally offend every native you speak

with. It seems trivial to say, but learn how they communicate, verbally and physically!

It goes without saying that fully immersing yourself into a language is the most effective way to take your ability to the next level. When you find yourself holding up the line in a local coffee shop because you can't find the words to place your order, you'd be surprised the amount of motivation you will have not to forget it the next time. The point is, if you have no other means of communication, you *will* learn the language. Remember, this is just another fun aspect of your adventure that will leave you feeling more capable than ever!

It only seems appropriate to leave you with the advice that my mother gave to me three years ago. After four very long months of not being able to decide if I was actually going to submit my application, my mother finally said to me, "Jessica, if you're going to do it, just do it. Otherwise, stop talking about it!" You're probably thinking that what she said was unsupportive; especially for a parent, but it was exactly what I needed to hear. This type of black and white, yes or no, made me realize that I couldn't possibly pass up this opportunity! To her surprise, I turned in my application the next day. I am now here to tell you that this is truly an experience that you need to take advantage of. Look into it. Ask other students who have gone. Talk to an advisor. You won't regret it! A semester abroad is undoubtedly the one thing you must do before you graduate. ■

## THE ITALIAN CLUB HAS NEVER BEEN SO ALIVE!

This semester, thanks to our new officers, Tessa (President), Molly (Vice-President), Leanna (Secretary) and Diane (Treasurer), the Italian Club applied for and obtained funds from the SGA. Two very well attended Movie Nights were organized during the semester, with more than 20 students and several professors in attendance each time. *La Tigre e La Neve* (The Tiger and the Snow) was shown on March 30 and *Le Chiavi Di Casa* (The Keys to the House) was shown on April 20. Refreshments and appetizers were served during the movies, such as canoli and cookies from the North End.

The Italian Club has also organized a dinner in an Italian restaurant in Salem for the end of the semester. All are invited! New members are always welcome! If you are interested in joining the ITL club or if you would like to become an active officer, please contact our President Tessa Allen: [t\\_allen@salemstate.edu](mailto:t_allen@salemstate.edu).

Join the Italian Club mailing list elists. [salemstate.edu/mailman/listinfo/italianclub](http://salemstate.edu/mailman/listinfo/italianclub) or the Facebook page [facebook.com/group.php?gid=2218558787](https://facebook.com/group.php?gid=2218558787)





Ste Chretienne Academy and school in the late 1950's and 1960's

## FRANCO-AMERICANS OF SALEM: TELL YOUR FAMILY'S STORY!

By Elizabeth Blood, Foreign Languages

The French program and the American Studies program at Salem State are teaming up to begin an oral history project on Salem's Franco-American history. Although Salem today is most well-known for its Halloween festivities, witch trials and famous American literary figures, it is also a city that has welcomed several waves of immigrants who shape the city's economic and social life and who bring cultural and linguistic diversity to its streets.

One of the most important groups to populate the city in the late 19th and early 20th centuries were French-Canadian immigrants who came to work in area textile mills and leather and shoe factories. In the first decades of the 20th century, French-Canadian immigrants from Quebec and their Franco-American children made up 20% of the city's population, a significant percentage compared to other French-Canadian destinations in New England, and Salem was one of a handful of Massachusetts cities dubbed a "Petit Canada" or "Little Canada."

As they did in cities like Lowell, Worcester, Fall River, and Woonsocket, the French-Canadians of Salem built churches and schools, started businesses and opened shops, created credit unions, newspapers, and social clubs. They became teachers, policemen, firemen, tradesmen, business people, professionals, and politicians. They held on to French-Canadian traditions while beginning new traditions in

their Franco-American families. They changed the city just as they were changed by it.

This oral history project aims to collect the stories of Franco-Americans and their ancestors who adopted the city of Salem as their new home, focusing particularly on the relationship between the geography of the city of Salem and the concept of Franco-American identity. If you are of Franco-American ancestry, or if you have a Franco-American parent or grandparent who immigrated to or was raised in Salem, and are interested in participating in this project, please contact Dr. Elizabeth Blood ([eblood@salemstate.edu](mailto:eblood@salemstate.edu)) or Dr. Elizabeth Duclos-Orsello ([educlosorsello@salemstate.edu](mailto:educlosorsello@salemstate.edu)).

Oral history interviews may be conducted in English or French and will be used to create a Franco-American walking tour of Salem, in addition to academic research articles about Salem's Franco-American past. ■



Sainte-Chrétienne Academy, a Franco-American Catholic girls' school that opened in Salem in 1918, was later sold to Salem State and is now part of upper south campus.



## PHI SIGMA IOTA FOREIGN LANGUAGES HONOR SOCIETY NEWS

The 2011 induction of new members of the Phi Sigma Iota Foreign Language Honor Society took place on Thursday, April 28, from 4 to 6 pm, at the Presidential Hall, Alumni House, Upper South Campus.

Inductees include undergraduate majors and minors, graduate students in Spanish, faculty members, and members of the community who have shown extreme dedication to the study and spreading of foreign languages and cultures. New members are recruited by invitation from faculty based on exceptional academic achievement in foreign language study.

Check out the Phi Sigma Iota website for information about membership benefits, career opportunities and scholarships for students studying foreign languages:

<http://phisigmaiota.org/>

Foreign languages is proud to announce that the following people have been inducted into the Phi Sigma Iota honors society in 2011.

**Stephanie Amore**  
**Marielba Arias**  
**Brice A. Bambara**  
**Ali Carignan**  
**Samantha C. Cepican**  
**Patricia Y. DeLeon**  
**Armand DeVoie**  
**Katie A. Lyons**  
**Samuel Martinez**  
**Rebecca Martiniello-Hoffman**  
**Kathryn O'Connell**  
**Virginia O'Connell**  
**Cristina Paterno**  
**Lindsay Perry**  
**Jennifer Quigley**  
**Vanessa Risti**  
**Roxana Sandoval**  
**Alba Santana**  
**Kathryn Schulte**  
**Nicole Touloupoulos**  
**Jacqueline Turner**  
**Foteini Ventouris**  
**William Woolley**

More information about PSI visit [salemstate.edu/academics/schools/10712.php](http://salemstate.edu/academics/schools/10712.php)

See pictures of the recent induction ceremonies:

<http://irc.salemstate.edu/pictures/phisigmaiota2011/>  
<http://irc.salemstate.edu/pictures/phisigmaiota2010/>



# OUR FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDENTS: CROSSING BORDERS, LEARNING NEW LANGUAGES AND CULTURES WHILE KEEPING HOPES HIGH

By Anna Rocca, Foreign Languages



Valentin with friend Jessica in Rome

If Study Abroad is a crucial component in all of our language courses, examining the cases of Valentin, minoring in Italian, and Philemon, minoring in French and Italian, can be confusing about what abroad is. Despite their different origins and stories of migration, Valentin and Philemon share at least four things: a high level of adaptability, great foreign language skills, the desire to improve their education and life and, finally, the yearning to be involved in anything related to Italy. Resourceful, open-minded, quick learners, resilient and sometimes nostalgic about what they left behind, Valentin and Philemon crossed at least three countries, experienced the bad and good of them and always kept a graceful and courageous attitude towards life. Having like-native knowledge of Italian, when I spoke to them I could detect the slight inflection of the city's dialect in which they learned the language. Following are some details of their lives:

## VALENTIN FERASTOARU

**Anna Rocca:** Hi, Valentin. Tell us a little bit about yourself.

**Valentin Ferastoaru:** I was born in Brasov, Romania. It is a very nice city in a mountain area and has a relevant part in the history of my country. At Salem State, my major is business administration with a concentration in hospitality management. My minor is in Italian language.

**AR:** What is your native language and how many languages were spoken in your family?

**VF:** My native language is Romanian. My family didn't speak any other languages except Romanian, a language that has Latin origins and dated back to the invasion of the Romans. I was about 14 when I learned Italian and 18 when I studied English in Romania. I learned Italian by watching Italian cartoons, the only ones on our Romanian TV channels. That is how I stumbled upon Italian TV channels like Italia1, Rt4, Canale 5 etc. noticing the similarity between the two languages. I studied English when I started working in the hospitality

industry in my hometown. There, because of The Dracula Castle, many tourists visit during the summer. Taking advantage of our history, I started to do castle tours and also worked in the local hostels in Brasov. I learned English by watching the Discovery Channel and by speaking with tourists from different countries.

**AR:** When did you leave your country and why?

**VF:** I left Romania in 2005 when I was about 21 and moved to Catania, Italy. Through one of my friends, I met an Italian entrepreneur who promised that he would provide a job and a place to live if we would help with his restaurant renovation. We accepted the offer and had big hopes for the future. That is how my journey started. I was not very good as a construction worker. I thus decided to move to the capital, Rome, to find a better job.

**AR:** Can you describe your most significant experiences abroad? What did you learn or have to learn? What did you enjoy, love, miss of that country?

**VF:** I had many significant experiences but the most important and the happiest one was in Rome, when I met my fiancé who, at that time, was studying Italian. A not so positive experience was in Catania. In fact, I had to leave the city after I was brutally beaten by the Italian entrepreneur who had offered me a job. I learned the hard way how challenging it is to be in a different country all by myself. However, I was lucky to know the language as it helped me to report him to the authorities. After this terrible incident, I moved to Rome, where some Italian friends helped me to find a place to stay. Once again, I found a job after a couple of days because of my language skills. In Rome I also learned a new profession, bartender, which I could do because it was not too hard for me to read and communicate with the trainers. There, I really enjoyed the food, the good wine, the culture, the happy people and the long hours of aperitivo. I missed all of my friends that were like my family, and all the summer days that I spent on the Mediterranean beaches. Currently I live in Massachusetts and this has proved to be a great experience so far.

**AR:** How much the knowledge of a second/third language helped you along the way and how?

**VF:** Learning Italian and English was fun and this knowledge helped me to find a job, integrate in new societies, connect with people and feel like less of a stranger. If I didn't speak Italian or English I would probably be home in Brasov, perhaps doing something I would not enjoy. I can honestly say that the foreign language skills have been and still are at the core of my life's improvement.

**AR:** Why did you decide to leave your second country?

**VF:** The story has a happy ending and I

decided to move from Italy to the US because I fell in love with my fiancé. We met in Rome at the restaurant-bar where I was working, in Piazza Campo dei Fiori. We decided that I should move to MA to start building a future together.

**AR:** Why Salem State University?

**VF:** I chose Salem State because it is one of the few universities that has affordable tuition and good Professors. I also realize that my personal learning experience and relation to culture is perhaps the most important thing.



Philemon with son

## PHILEMON AWAH

**Anna Rocca:** Hello. Can you tell us a little bit about yourself?

**Philemon Awah:** My name is Philemon Awah. I was born in Befang, a small village in the North-West Province of Cameroon. At Salem State, my major is biology and my minor is foreign language.

**AR:** What is your native language and how many languages were spoken in your family?

**PA:** My native languages are the Befang and the Obang languages that I use to communicate with my parents. With my brothers we communicate with a primitive type of English called Pidgin English. Cameroon is a bilingual country: English and French are its official languages. In addition, each village uses a separate language to communicate so that there are a total of at least 250 traditional languages in use. These languages are so different from each other that when spoken, a person from a neighboring village cannot understand a single word. However, because intermarriages and people frequently visiting other villages for commercial purposes, they tend to understand some portion of others' languages. For example my father was from Befang, but he married my mother from another village called Obang, which is about 40 miles away. In my family, we therefore speak both the Befang and the Obang languages.

**AR:** When did you leave your country and why?

**PA:** I left my country for Russia in May 1997

to study at the University of Stavropol. This was after having my advance level certificate in Cameroon. I obtained a government scholarship because, at that time, my country had an agreement with the Russian Government where students could easily move to study. Not only was I coming from a very hot climate and had never had any idea of how winter was, my clothes were also inappropriate for the Russian climate. Once at the Moscow airport, I encountered what I never expected. There was still snow melting and the temperatures were below 0 degree Celsius. I was almost frozen travelling from the airport to the school campus. It took me 24 hours by train to reach the school that was located in the Southern Caucasus of Russia. The next experience I had was with the Russian language. I remember going to a roadside kiosk to buy food. I ordered chicken and bread, but the sellers were all looking at each other because none of them understood my English until I had to make the sound of a rooster. For the next two weeks, each time I came to that

kiosk I was given chicken and bread. But in just six months of learning the language in school, I could speak it and even write it. I miss the Russian people for their overwhelming sense of humor and entertainment.

The city in which my school was situated was at the border between Russia and Chechnya. During this period, because of the war between the two countries, it was difficult to study. Many foreigners were targeted, especially people of color, so I left for Italy in August 2000.

When I arrived in Italy, I had to start all over again, different language, different people, the food, the weather and so many other new things. I was no longer on a government scholarship so I had to live on my own. I knew some friends from my country who lived there, but they had a very small apartment so they could not accommodate me. They then talked to another friend of theirs who took me to his house, but I just had the bare floor to sleep on and used my little travelling bag as my pillow. My conditions began changing in the

fourth month, after I found a job in a factory. The idea of continuing my education was in my mind but I was still figuring out when and how I could go back to school. At the end of 2003, in the factory I met my fiancé and by 2005 we were living together waiting for our first son Edmond. With the birth of his younger brother Ishmael in 2007, the idea of going back to school was not possible. The children were too young and our financial situation was not that good. I continued to live with my family thinking of when destiny could come true, because my education had always been my dream since childhood.

At that point, I came in contact with a friend who studied at Salem State University and he encouraged me to apply as a student. Slowly but surely, today I see my dreams coming true. The one thing I miss every day is my family. Although I talk daily to them on Skype, I still miss them and they miss me too. But I strongly believe in my goal and I know that the sacrifices I'm doing now will bring a better future for my kids and the whole family. ■

## WHY LEARNING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IS GOOD FOR BUSINESS STUDENTS

By Michele C. Dávila, Foreign Languages

The enrollment for MBA's, especially for the international business concentration, has increased exponentially in US colleges and universities in the past few years according to the **Council on Graduate Schools "Graduate Enrollment and Degrees Report,"** [www.cgsnet.org/default.aspx?tabid=168](http://www.cgsnet.org/default.aspx?tabid=168)). This trend substantiates the notion that Business degrees are on the ascendency, to the detriment of Arts & Sciences degrees. Is it possible that the business world doesn't need arts and sciences in their curriculum, or even in the formation of a business person? Are the two areas mutually exclusive by definition?

In reality, a strong case can be made for the proposition that courses in the Arts and Sciences actually help future business people in their jobs and make them better equipped to deal with people in general, but especially with other cultures and global markets. Hopefully Chevrolet will never again try to sell a car with a name such as "No go" as occurred in Latin America years ago with the *Nova*, for example. Not only does understanding other cultures make them better masters of the marketing world, but it is a well known fact in the global market that speaking languages other than English gives business people an advantage. How is this?

If businesses want to be competitive in the business world they have to adapt to new situations, be flexible, and understand the peoples and cultures to whom they want to sell their wares. This is evident even in the numerous books one can find in any bookstore dealing with international business

etiquette, where they invariably explain and teach business people how to behave and act in other countries. The era of the all powerful American business partner is on the verge of extinction. Now it is wiser to "do as the Romans do" instead of replicating the American way throughout the world. One very important factor that helps in this area is learning a foreign language. *The Business Journal* agrees: "The 'American way' is constantly evolving. Hopefully, we are incorporating the best ideas from other cultures as well as from the minority cultures right here in our own backyard. Cultural diversity, as well as both understanding and appreciating the language and culture of others, is going to be part of the global economy for the remainder of this century." (*"What's the importance of learning a foreign language?"* *The Business Journal*, <http://www.bizjournals.com/triad/stories/2005/08/29/editorial2.html>). The numbers don't lie: Chinese is the language of 1.3 billion people, Arabic is the official language of 22 countries (255 million speakers), and Spanish is the language of 21 countries (the first language of over 400 million people, and consumers).

For international business students it is emphatically important to be able to

communicate with their prospective markets in their own language. People from other countries feel very well indeed when someone tries to speak their own language, even if it's at a very basic level. It demonstrates interest, appreciation and above all, respect. It helps to iron out discrepancies and dispel cultural shock. This is a fact that many universities in the US are nowadays acknowledging. For example, the following is how one of them promotes its MBA program on the Internet:

"As the global market continues to grow, more and more schools are adopting the viewpoint that to truly become a global business leader, knowledge of a foreign language has become a vital skill that all graduates must have. In order to be a contributing part of an environment that is no longer western-centric as it has been in the past, being able to communicate with your clients is only part of the issue. Knowledge of their language as well as their culture shows that you respect the ideas that they bring to the table and you understand their needs and wants better than somebody who does not have this background. . . Your clients will be more likely to trust what you are saying and there will be a more intimate relationship than if you were to conduct all communication through a translator. This could be an important step in building strong and lasting business relationships that help ensure the success of your own business." ([earnmbadegree.com/language-in-business.htm](http://earnmbadegree.com/language-in-business.htm))

This would be a very boring world if everybody thought and did the exact same thing in the exact same way. So, business students, remember: learning another language will give you countless advantages in your professional life and, most importantly, it will enrich your whole life. ■



Bertolon School of Business

## STUDYING IN OVIEDO

By Daniel Godden, Spanish Major

*Daniel Godden is a graduating Spanish Major who studied under the Professional Concentration. He is one of the five Salem State students who completed a semester abroad in Oviedo Spain during 2010. During the academic year, the University of Oviedo has a wonderful Language and Culture Program for foreigners at two different levels, Intermediate and Advanced. There are a variety of courses to choose from. The best part of the program is its affordability, studying a semester in Oviedo is around the same price as studying a semester at Salem State. Here are some thoughts from Daniel Godden about his stay in Oviedo in Fall 2010.*

Oviedo is a beautiful city in the province of Asturias. The city's attractiveness makes the trip to school nice. All of the students that went had walks of no more than ten minutes. There are numerous parks in the city and it is a central stop for most forms of transportation, which makes traveling easy.

The classes for all "extranjeros" are located in "La Casa de Las Lenguas." This is where you will see lots of foreigners and fellow Americans studying in the same program. The first day of classes is a placement test. After that, you

find out what level you are placed in and then choose your classes. I found the classes very interesting and educational. First, as you would expect, they are completely in Spanish, which is good because you take more in. All of the



*Daniel Godden in Oviedo, Spain*

teachers are very nice, accommodating and helpful. I suggest entering the Tandem program where you are paired with a conversation partner that is a Spaniard learning English.

I could not have asked for a better living situation than the one I had. My family consisted of a mother, father and two daughters. In regard to the latter, one lived

there while the other was away at school. The daughter was my age and planned to move to London with her boyfriend so we learned from each other. The father was an anesthesiologist in a local hospital and the mother was a primary school teacher. All of the family members were very welcoming and kind. They even invited me to a second house they owned in a small coastal village north of Oviedo.

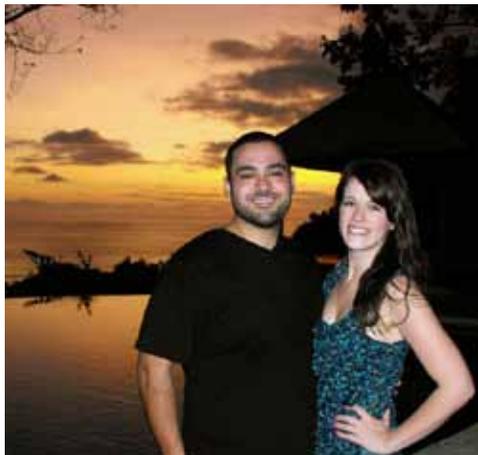
The locals are friendly and it is easy to strike up a conversation with most. One surefire way to meet locals is to go to cafes and bars. In Oviedo, there is a street called "Calle Mon" where the nightlife happens. Many people come from surrounding cities at night to go out here. The streets are filled which is rather different than in the U.S. Congregating in the nearby "Plaza del Sol" is also a popular thing to do.

All in all, Oviedo is a great place to study abroad for numerous reasons such as the classes, its nightlife, its status as a natural paradise which is popular with hikers and people who just enjoy the outside, and—most importantly—its people. I urge any fellow students to think about going to do it. It is financially possible whether you think it so or not. It is also completely worth it. It is an experience that will change your life for the better. ■

## MY COSTA RICAN ADVENTURE

By Michael Aliberte, Spanish Major

When people hear about Costa Rica, they typically think about one thing: beaches. Although this small Central American country is well known for attracting tourists for its famous and beautiful beaches, there is so much more to do there than one would think. This past New Years holiday, I had the pleasure of traveling to this amazingly diverse country for



*Michael Aliberte and Callie Walsh Costa Rica*

a unique and fun filled experience. The town I called home for eight days was the little Pacific coast surfing town of Dominical. Everything from the people and their way of life to the nature and wildlife was unique and beautiful.

I refer to this town as "unique" for two main reasons. First, it is an ideal vacationing spot for Spanish speaking and non-Spanish speaking people alike, and second; whether you are an avid adventurer or a wildlife enthusiast, there was something here for everyone to enjoy. My group consisted of 15 people, the youngest was a college freshman that was 19 years old and enjoyed surfing and white water rafting (both things I experienced for the first time on the trip), and the eldest was an 85 year old grandmother that enjoyed bird watching and sitting on the Pacific sands at the local beach. The local townspeople also made the trip both feasible as well as enjoyable for all. I was the only Spanish speaker out of the 15 people, however I felt everyone in our group was able to communicate with the locals. Although the area is quite touristy, especially during the dry season, everybody was able to do their own thing and enjoy the beautiful country as they saw fit.

I previously mentioned that there was so much more to do in Costa Rica than visit a beach. There are over 850 species of birds that call Costa Rica home, so it is an ideal spot for amateur and avid bird watchers alike. For the adventurer, there is the aforementioned white water rafting, big wave surfing, zip lining, horse back riding, and animal filled nature hikes just to name a few things. For those that wish to practice their Spanish speaking skills, the economy of Costa Rica largely depends on tourism, therefore a majority of the people spoke English (some more than others, but



*Western Coast, white faced capuchin monkeys*

many people spoke very well!). During the summer of 2008, I had the opportunity to study abroad in Oviedo, Spain for the month of July. For a well developed, rich-in-history country like Spain, you would expect the people to speak English rather well, considering it is taught in their curriculum from an early age. And they did. However, for a developing country like Costa Rica, I was personally pleased to discover that although I really enjoyed being able to speak Spanish, I could revert to English with most people if need be.

If you're planning a trip, Costa Rica is a **must visit** location at some point in your traveling career. The country is rich with good people, delicious food, beautiful scenery, and the opportunity to develop as a Spanish speaker. At times, I felt as if the locals considered me to be one of them, and that feeling of accomplishment is something that Salem State University and the professors of the foreign languages have so generously provided me with. ■

# INTERVIEW WITH CHARLES BERRY, CULTURAL AMBASSADOR TO SPAIN

By Fátima Serra, Foreign Languages



Charles Berry (bottom row, second from the right, next to Dr. Serra) and Alyssa Barras (two people to the left of Charles) with a group of SSU in Oviedo, Spain, 2009

## Salem State Students are Cultural Ambassadors in Spain

Salem State will have three of our own help Spanish students learn English during the 2011-2012 academic year. The Ministry of Education of Spain hires North American students and recent graduates to help teachers of English as a foreign language. It is a win-win program: American students get the linguistic and cultural benefits of a year abroad experience and Spanish students get to practice their English with native speakers and learn about an English-speaking culture first hand.

Salem State students Daniel Godden, Alyssa Barras and Charles Berry have been selected to participate in the program next year. The three of them are graduates of the Oviedo study abroad summer program, and Alyssa and Daniel also completed a semester at the Universidad de Oviedo. They illustrate how abroad can open new doors and a life of opportunity.

Charles Berry, Former Nursing major/ Spanish minor gives us some insight into the program:

### Why did you apply to the Cultural Ambassador Program?

I chose to apply for the cultural ambassador program for several reasons. The first reason is because I wanted to learn the Spanish language. I have always wanted to speak Spanish and I have never had the time in my life to truly dedicate myself to learning it. The second reason is because I went to Spain two summers ago and I had the best experience of my life. I met new and interesting people, learned more Spanish than I ever had in the past and I gained a new outlook on life that

I never would have adopted if it weren't for my travels to Oviedo, Spain. The last reason I applied to this program is because I would like to pursue a career in international health. What would look better than international work experience and learning a foreign language, one that is often needed in the health care profession?

### What will your job consist of?

I will be assisting an English teacher in a middle school or high school. I will assist primarily with conversational English. I will also be teaching the students about my culture, its values, norms, and customs.

### Where are you going to live?

The program leaves it up to you to find accommodations. The faculty and staff of your designated school will assist you but will not find it for you. I am hoping to either room with Spanish natives in a Spanish home, or with other cultural assistants. I would prefer to live with Spanish natives, because it would force me to understand and learn more of the Spanish language.

### How much money will you receive?

I will receive a minimum of 700 net Euros per month. I have not yet heard about the specific amount because it varies from region to region depending on the cost of living in each region.

### What do you anticipate to get from your year in Spain?

I anticipate learning and comprehending a majority of the Spanish language to the best of my ability, performing to the best of my ability in my role as a cultural ambassador and gaining a terrific and rare life experience. I can guess that it will be fun, amazing, scary, nerve-

racking, and many more emotions at different times.

### The region of your destination, what is it like?

The region I will be residing in will be País Vasco or "Basque Country." It is a region in the north of Spain on the northern coast line. To the east of the region is the French border and the Pyrenees mountain range. There are two official languages spoken in the area; Spanish and Euskera or Basque.

### How did you learn about the program? When do you recommend other students to apply?

I was told about the program by Dr. Serra while I was in Spain studying two summers ago. The application period begins in November and timing is of the highest importance. Assuming one qualifies, timing is the main determinant of whether one is accepted or rejected. All students interested should visit the cultural ambassadors website in early November and have their applications completed and submitted by the end of the month.

I would recommend other students to apply if they have similar goals as I have. If they would like to build a unique resume, have an outgoing and adventurous personality, and are eager to learn something about themselves and the people that live amongst us in the world. And remember, you do not need to be a Spanish major. The prerequisite is an Intermediate level of Spanish to participate in the program.

For those who would like to participate in future years, you can find additional the info at: [http://www.mec.es/sgci/usa/en/programs/us\\_assistants/default.shtml](http://www.mec.es/sgci/usa/en/programs/us_assistants/default.shtml) or contact Professor Serra in foreign languages. ■

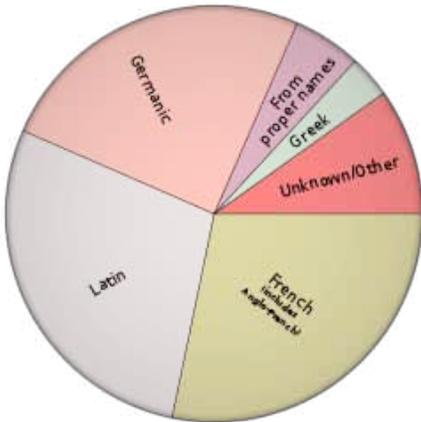
# THE ETYMOLOGICAL APPROACH TO LEARNING SPANISH VOCABULARY

By Jon Aske, Foreign Languages

I was recently teaching my elementary Spanish class about the troublesome Spanish prepositions *por* and *para*. These prepositions are problematic because both of them sometimes translate by means of the English preposition *for* and this confuses students. When I asked my students, ¿*Qué es una preposición?* “What is a preposition?” I got mostly blank stares, so I figured a short discussion of grammatical terminology was in order. I decided to try the etymological approach and so I told them that we should analyze the word *preposición* “preposition.” My students are used to our not missing any chances to compare Spanish words to cognate English words, that is, words that look and sound alike and have very similar, if not identical, meanings.

Those who follow my historical linguistics columns in *Lingua Franca* may remember that the word **cognate** in linguistics has to do with native words of related languages having a common ancestor. So in that sense the English word *fish* and the equivalent Spanish word *pez* are cognates since they both derive ultimately from the word *peisk* in the ancestor language of both English and Spanish (Proto-Indo-European). (If this seems odd to you, you should know that in old English *fish* was something like *fisc* and in old Spanish, aka Latin, *pez* was *piscis*, and then the similarities will be more obvious.)

Influences in English Vocabulary



In language teaching, however, two words are called cognates if they sound or look alike and also have the same or very similar meaning, irrespective of where they come from. So for a language teacher, *fish* and *pez* are not cognates, like they are for the historical linguist, since they don't really look alike. And for a historical linguist, English *telephone* and Spanish *teléfono* would not be cognates, since they are both a word made up in the 19th century from Greek parts, but they are indeed cognates for a language teacher. Cognates for language teachers are “friendly words,” since they are supposedly easy to learn. Words that sound or look alike, but have different

meanings are called **false cognates** or **false friends** by language teachers (more on this later).

So, breaking the word *preposition* into two was easy enough for my students: *pre* + *position*. The second part, *position*, was not a problem: *position* is like *location*, the place where something is. The first part, *pre*, was not much of a problem either. This is a prefix in many English words, from *precondition* to *pre-fabricated*. It means “before.” The equivalent Germanic version is *fore*, as in *forearm* and *forethought* (*fore*, by the way, is a cognate of Latin *pre*, since both come from Proto-Indo-European *per*: notice how here, as in the case of *fish*, Latin has *p* where English has *f*; also notice that the word *before* is derived from the old adverb *fore*).

So a preposition is something you put before something else. And what is that something else? One of my students said “the subject.” Someone else said “the verb.” Obviously they didn't have a very clear idea of what a preposition is. So I had to tell them that a preposition usually comes before a **noun phrase**, together with which forms a **prepositional phrase**. Nothing cleared this up like a few examples, such as *en la casa* “in the house,” where *en* “in” is the preposition and *la casa* “the house” is the noun phrase; or *para mi profesor* “for my teacher,” where *para* “for” is a preposition and *mi profesor* “my teacher” is a noun phrase. Could it really be that my students had gone through high school without ever learned what a preposition is? Indeed most of them did.

Anyway, I would like to think that my students got a kick out of what came next. I put the English word *prepose* on the board and asked them if they could come up with other words that ended in *-pose*. It didn't take long to come up with a list: *suppose*, *oppose*, *compose*, *depose*, *expose*, *impose*, *dispose*, etc. I explained that all these words came from Latin and were formed by a Latin preposition (the prefix) plus the root *-pose*, which means something like “to put.” Spanish equivalents have *poner* “to put” where English has *pose*. So *sup-* (which comes from *sub*) means “under” and thus *suppose*—*suponer* in Spanish—is “to put under,” as in a foundation for our reasoning (Spanish also away with Latin double letters, since they are only pronounced once). Next, *op-* (which comes from *ob*) means “against,” so *oppose*—*oponer* in Spanish—is “to put against.” *Com*, which comes from *con*, means “with” or “together,” so *compose*—*componer* in Spanish, is literally “to put together” (in Spanish *componer* can also mean “to repair”). *De* means “away”; so *depose*—*deponer* in Spanish—is “to put away.” *Ex* means “off, out,” so *expose*—*exponer* in Spanish, means “to put out.” Finally, *im*, which comes from *in*, means “in, on,” so *impose*—*imponer* in Spanish, means “to put on” as in a

The Germanic Family of Languages



putting a burden on someone. And so on.

This approach to teaching vocabulary, never mind that this time I used it to teach a grammatical concept, is called the **etymological approach** because it brings up the original meaning of a word, its etymology. Spanish is a language that derives directly from Latin, so most of its vocabulary is clearly related to Latin. Sometimes the relationship is obvious, as in Spanish *rosa* “rose,” which comes from Latin *ROSA*, and other times it is not, such as *hambre* “hunger,” which comes from Latin *famine*, for many sound and meaning changes took place across the centuries that may have obscured a word's relationship to its etymon, its original source.

It is important to realize that Latin-based words in Spanish come from two sources. One set are the words that were transmitted orally from generation to generation and which in many cases suffered sound and meaning changes. These are sometimes called **popular words** (*palabras patrimoniales* in Spanish). The other set consists of **classical words** (*palabras cultas* or *cultismos* in Spanish), words which had been abandoned in the spoken Spanish of the early Middle Ages and which were rediscovered in the late Middle Ages when Spanish became a written language that needed to enrich its vocabulary to make it as rich as that of Latin. What better place could there be to obtain fancy words than written Latin itself, the model of all written languages in Europe at the time? As we saw in an earlier entry in *Lingua Franca*, Latin too acquired some of its fancy vocabulary from other languages, in particular from classical Greek. These words, however, didn't undergo the sound and meaning changes that popular words did.

And where do all the Latin words in English come from? Unlike Spanish, French, Italian, and Portuguese, English does not come from Latin. However, England was ruled by French speaking Normans for 300 years at the beginning of the last millennium, and at that time a great many French (and thus Latin-based) words entered the language. Then, once it became a written language, English too found itself in need to enrich its vocabulary so that it would be as rich as that of Latin, the model of a rich written language in Europe during the Middle Ages.

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