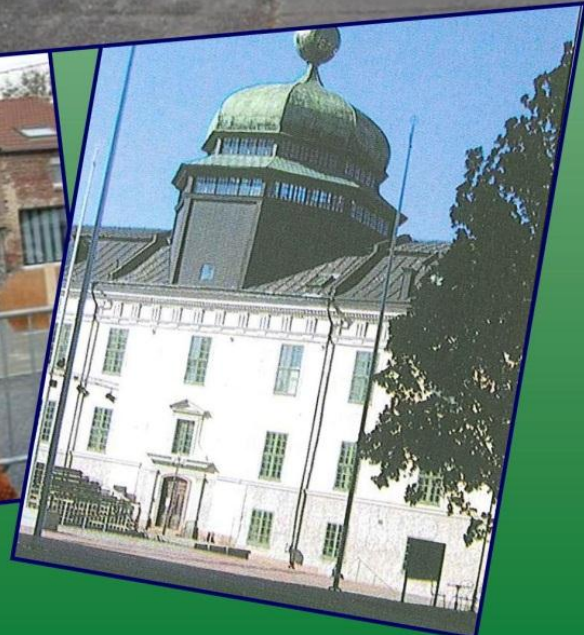




# Polyglot

No. 34, December 2009

## Going places





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Issue No. 34, December 2009

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*Note : Polyglot is published annually in electronic format and is available to members of NZALT via the website <http://nzalt.org.nz/> . This copy was compiled from the online version. Photos and images are at screen resolution and hyperlinks are still contained in the text.*



## EDITORIAL

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Welcome to this year's edition of Polyglot. I hope you will enjoy the range of articles written by teachers around the country. While I am not a language teacher, I've been a student of various languages for 16 years, so working on Polyglot has been interesting - to learn about some of the things that go on within the teaching world and to see all the effort put into bringing the best to the students. I have particularly enjoyed reading about all the new technologies and how they are being used in the classroom to support language learning.

I am living in Barcelona at the moment and putting much of what I learned in the New Zealand classroom to use speaking Spanish here. I am also learning Catalan. Catalan was prohibited in Francoist Spain (1939-1975) but today it is an official language of Catalonia; it is taught throughout the education system and is the language of commerce, media and regional politics. Most Catalan people seem to prefer to speak it over Spanish and it is a great example of how minority languages can survive and thrive given the right environment.

Thank you to the contributors for making this year's Polyglot possible.

Best wishes

Jasmine Langdale  
Editor

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# POLYGLOT 2009

## A brief message from NZALT President, Adèle Scott

Once again it is great to share in the fantastic things that are happening in languages classrooms around the country (and in the countries our members have been visiting) through this publication. You will notice some changes to Polyglot in 2009, and I would like to take this opportunity to welcome Jasmine to the NZALT team. Jasmine is a fluent speaker of Spanish, is currently living in Spain and is a freelance journalist - what more could we ask for!

I was delighted to attend the award ceremony for two of the winners of the banner competition in Hawke's Bay recently (see photos). The ceremony also incorporated the inaugural Eunice Beveridge memorial award for French and Japanese which will be awarded each year alongside the NZALT student competition.

Contributions to Polyglot this year include great ways to use languages for communication using an ever-increasing range of tools. In my own working life, hardly a day goes by without one of my colleagues showing me a new gadget, online tool or website with the potential to increase the engagement of learners and teachers alike! I don't always have the time to check them all out but it's always good to be challenged to look at the way we do things - not to change for the sake of it but to apply a critical eye to see if we might improve what we are offering our students.

Across the regions our members have benefited from many activities organised or supported by NZALT. LangSems provide a wonderful chance to meet up with our national advisers and school support services advisers - we do appreciate your ongoing input and enthusiasm for languages programmes across the country. The Massey LangSem was aptly named Dawn of the New Curriculum as we wait with bated breath to see what the new day will bring. According to Wikipedia, the duration of the period between dawn and sunrise varies greatly with the observer's latitude, from a few minutes in equatorial regions to hours in polar regions. I imagine there will be times when we feel more polar than equatorial in relation to how the new learning area is being implemented, but these are also the times when the perseverance and resolve language learners are renowned for come into play. I urge you to hang in there and to keep the

Executive informed how things are going so we can represent you in the best possible way when it matters. I am reminded of a Japanese proverb:

あめふ                      じかた  
雨降って地固まる

Literally, the proverb means after rain falls, the ground hardens; ie: difficulties and challenges can lead to greater strength than before they started.



Winner: Pictured are, from (top) left, the mother of the Japanese banner winner, the winner Alice, Matt Beveridge and Alice's teacher Nori Yamada. Behind them and pictured (left) is the winning banner.

Lastly, I would like to announce the establishment of a new award for NZALT Members. The Excellence in Teaching Languages Award will recognise the work of a member in the field of languages teaching in either the primary, secondary or tertiary sector.

The Excellence in Teaching Languages Award consists of a citation and a taonga and is open to all members of NZALT. The Executive invites you to become familiar with the nomination and selection criteria on the NZALT website. The deadline for submission of nominations for both this award and Life Membership awards is the end of February each year.

I wish you all a safe and relaxing break.

[Click here for next article](#)

# NZALT REGIONAL ROUND-UP 2009

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## Auckland

By Catherine Linnen, NZALT Secretary and Auckland Regional Officer

The Auckland branch of NZALT held a well-attended AGM at the start of this year and the following were elected to office: President, Doug Anderson (St Kentigern College); secretary, Stephanie Mortimore (Rangitoto College); treasurer, Catherine Linnen (Waiuku College).

Catherine Linnen was nominated to replace Doug as regional officer.

## Events of 2009

- Meeting about new matrix.
- Professional development (PD) day for primary and secondary teachers in July, where topics such as new matrix, new assessment formats, curriculum and specific teaching strategies were covered.
- PD day for French teachers in July.
- There has been high attendance at PD days and meetings this year and NZALT Auckland has become a vibrant local organisation.

Japanese students visited the zoo as part of International Languages Week. They had to complete a Japanese worksheet with directions and questions to be answered along the way. The aim was to arrive at the Japanese garden in Auckland Zoo first. The first team there with all the correct answers won. It was kind of an 'Amazing Race' activity.

We collaborated with Auckland University of Technology (AUT) for the Japanese Speech Festival where we judged and provided prizes for the secondary part of the competition. The winners then had to give their speeches at the Taste of Japan Day held by the New Zealand/Japan Foundation. Doug and Catherine attended.

## Canterbury

By Jo Rittey, Canterbury/West Coast/Nelson Regional Officer

## Meetings

The Committee met at the beginning of the year and selected dates each term for our meetings. We were then able to give members advance warning.

This has worked well and we will do the same thing next year.



Top communicators: the winners of the Year 12 Japanese speech competition

## Langsem August 14

One hundred and thirty teachers from the region attended this very successful day. The Japanese and French sections were quite large with smaller numbers in German, Spanish, Chinese and Maori. The sessions were fairly language specific but many presenters are pitching at "all levels", to cover Year 7 and 8 as a few teachers came from intermediate schools. Riccarton Park is a great venue for a conference, but the downside is there are no computer labs or internet access. To this end, a separate IT day or weekend has been discussed to meet those needs. This was run successfully last year on a Friday afternoon and Saturday morning so we will try to replicate that.

## Certificates of Excellence

A total of 291 certificates of excellence were awarded to 23 schools in the region.

## Massey

By James Donaldson, Massey Regional Officer

## LangSem

This was a great success with about 50 delegates from New Plymouth to Hawke's Bay. The keynote speaker was Dr Paul Sulzberger from Victoria University who entertained with his linguistic study findings about language acquisition, comparing it to his grandson learning to ride a skateboard.

The rest of the day was full of useful ideas to help implement the 2007 Curriculum by using internet, video and computers to task-based learning. The day finished with Gunhild Litwin updating delegates on Ministry of Education developments. The NZALT AGM was also part of proceedings.

#### Senior Speech Contests

There have been numerous senior student speech contests around the region for Japanese. This is a good opportunity for students to showcase their NCEA speeches in front of native speakers.

#### PPTA Curriculum Days

These have been held around the region this term and have been an ideal time to network and see what other schools are doing. It was a productive day for most teachers, or at least time out to consider the changes ahead. A big thumbs-up to PPTA for some support!

#### Otago/Southland

By Kirstyn Mawdsley, Otago/Southland Regional Officer

The Otago/Southland branch has maintained its active nature and continues to meet twice a term and have various committee meetings in addition to these meetings as well.

We continue to run language camps for Japanese, French and German and also try to make the most of the variety of opportunities presented to our students, such as speech festivals, short film competitions and Language Perfect. In fact Otago Girls' High School took out the Language Perfect Vocabulary Olympics and Columba College and John McGlashan College won the Year 7-10 and Year 11-13 categories (respectively) of the Goethe Institut Short Film Festival.

In addition to this we have also had the following going on:

#### Langsem

Teachers from around Otago and Southland gathered in August for our Langsem. This was an exceptionally worthwhile day, which focussed on the revised curriculum and implementation thereof. Langsem allowed teachers to share resources, discuss intercultural teaching and learning and also look at how to motivate students in using the target language enthusiastically.

#### Japan Day

Dunedin's Year 12 and 13 students of Japanese had the opportunity to take part in Japan Day. This was an action-packed, fun, motivating

Amazing Race-style day organised by some of the Japanese teachers in town. It gave the students a chance to utilise their language skills and see Japanese "in action", with the tea ceremonies, judo lessons and finally the evening film.

We also had a visit from NZALT's very own president. Adèle Scott came by for a flying visit, but was able to see the Otago/Southland branch of NZALT in action. Adèle attended our regular meeting and heard our concerns about the lack of a language advisor in this region (with no appointment this is of ongoing concern), saw the appointment of a new regional officer (Kirstyn Mawdsley) and also heard feedback from schools on all of the fantastic activities carried out in the region for International Languages Week.

#### Victoria

By Philippa Doig, Victoria Regional Officer

It is a concern to me that membership numbers for Victoria are lower than in recent years and do not reflect the population of language teachers in the Wellington region. But those teachers who do participate do so enthusiastically and appreciate the support NZALT Victoria gives them.

The NZALT meeting on April 2 featured

- Draws for a Spanish CD and free membership of NZALT
- NZALT update
- Jocelyn Laine from ILANZ spoke about the native-speaker assistantship programme, supported by Sue Kano who spoke from her own experience of having a French assistant at her school. Language Perfect's Craig and Shane Smith demonstrated their software in a computer room.

More than 20 Wellington teachers attended this meeting with afternoon tea – many were not members of NZALT. I think all attendees thought it was useful and successful.

LangSem Diversity is Strength:  
Achievement for All

As an experiment we held LangSem on a Saturday, September 19. There are many advantages to having LangSem out of school hours: we are able to use a school as a venue, there are no problems parking, it's cheaper for schools that do not have to pay relievers, there's no relief for teachers to set, there are no lessons with senior classes missed. But we ended up with 70 teachers attending instead of the more usual 100-110 and I feel the next LangSem should return to a weekday in a non-school venue. Some teachers wrote on

evaluation forms that they would not have come during the week but clearly many teachers were not prepared to give up a Saturday, especially at the end of term 3. The date was driven by my absence overseas during May and June and I feel should return to earlier in the year in 2011.

For those who attended the day was successful.

Keynote speaker: Paul Sulzberger on The Neural Pathway to Learning Languages.

Secondary Plenary: Margaret Hardiman (Ministry of Education): Standards Curriculum Alignment.

Primary Plenary: Kate Ryan: Who does most of the talking in class? Strategies to get students using the target language.

Primary Plenary: Nicole Donaldson, Anne-Marie Hickson and Inka Helwig: Switch them on! Using e-learning to sustain the learning.

Round Robin section: Quickfire activities for Year 7 to Year 10. This was again very successful – teachers moved every 15 minutes to a room where a teacher demonstrated a five to 10 minute activity adaptable to any language.

I would like to thank the conveners of the specific sections: Noeline Grant (Primary and Intermediate), Chunrong Song (Chinese), Juliet Kennedy (French), Margaret Gallaher (German), Sharon Henry (Japanese), Nofo Lalau (Samoan) and Isaac Watts (Spanish).

Future plans

- Immersion days for Year 10 students in term 4 after the seniors have left. These will be run by the teachers who would like to participate and NZALT will support financially. Teachers who participate must be members of NZALT.
- Supporting the regional adviser for languages by providing afternoon tea at a cluster meeting. This would be an opportunity to promote what NZALT has to offer.
- To continue visiting the providers of teacher education to promote free membership to student teachers in their final year of study.
- To develop a Wellington committee for NZALT Victoria.

Waikato

By David Hall, Waikato/Bay of Plenty Regional Officer

This year has seen the familiar mix of activities for language teachers in the Waikato-Bay of Plenty region, from meetings about the new NCEA standards alignment, to camps and activities for students, to our ever successful LangSem Waikato.

Membership numbers have risen to 71 paid-up members – a new record for Waikato.

Language stickers

For several years now NZALT Waikato has circulated languages stickers to its members for International Languages Week – a gesture I know is greatly appreciated by members and by their students. This year we made these available for



Language stickers: these were sold around the country during International Languages Week.

purchase by languages teachers throughout the country. The project was efficiently overseen by staff at Support Services, University of Waikato. It is heartening to see a project started by members in our region has now spread further afield.

Langsem

LangSem Waikato, our biennial professional development day and long-standing tradition, took place at the Hamilton Airport Conference Centre on Friday, September 4, ably convened once more by Jeanne Gilbert. Angela Clemens and Iti Joyce presented the keynote address, entitled "Te Kotahitanga and learning languages", a fascinating insight into the melding of these two notions. Language sessions covered French, German, Spanish, Japanese, Chinese and Year 7-8 teaching. Aquila Books, ETI, Language Perfect and New Beginnings were on hand to interact with teachers. We appreciated the time and effort put into preparation of the day by all presenters.

Feedback received was overwhelmingly positive. Thanks go to Julie George of St John's College and Robert Aldridge from St Paul's Collegiate for their leadership of NZALT Waikato this year.

# CHEZ LES CH'TIS

A trip to the north of France

By Caroline Chambers

French teacher, Avonside Girls' High School (Christchurch)

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« *Quiconque oublie son passé...est condamné à le revivre* » Primo Levi.

*I spent four weeks in September in Le Nord, close to the Belgian border, as a recipient of a New Zealand Ministry of Education Language Immersion Award. I stayed with the principal of a junior high school and her family in Bavay and spent some time at her school and in various senior high schools in the area. For anyone who has seen the film *Welcome to the Styx* I was staying with "Les Ch'tis", people who live in the north of France.*

This region of France has been fought over and occupied many times and for me the historical highlights were the Roman forum at Bagacum (Bavay), the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the battle of Malplaquet and the Wellington quarry at Arras.

The Roman forum was built in the first century AD and lasted for more than 300 years. The remains were discovered following German bombing of Bavay in 1940 and there is now an interesting museum with a significant collection of bronzes, pots and marble etc. You can put on 3D glasses to do a virtual tour of the forum then visit the diggings and walk on the paving stones that the citizens of Bavay walked on all those years ago. Bavay was a crossroads for troops and goods going east into Belgium and west into France and we travelled on many of these straight roads which still exist.

The anniversary of the battle of Malplaquet, September 11, 1709, was a gorgeous affair. Malplaquet was one of the bloodiest battles of the war over the Spanish succession fought between England and its allies lead by the Duke of Marlborough and France, Spain and their allies.

The festivities started with mass in the village with five Catholic priests in gorgeous white and sashes and a sober protestant in black. Then there was the opening of the exhibition in a 400-year-old barn and alcohol and speeches. They call the Duke of Marlborough "Malbrouck" here and there is a famous and disrespectful song about him! Volunteer "soldiers", representing all the nationalities that took part in the battle, camped for



**Festive:** Caroline Chambers poses with "18<sup>th</sup>-century soldiers" celebrating the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the battle of Malplaquet.

three days in the village and swaggered about in the most splendid early 18th century uniforms with wigs, swords, powder pouches and enormous hats. During the day there were several concerts of military music and soldiers could be seen preparing gunpowder, changing the guard and cooking over open fires. After a cold meal at 10, we went to see a *son et lumière* re-enactment with lots of men having a lovely time creating big bangs with canons and firing their rifles, which took ages to fill with powder and actually get to work. It was dark but well lit so you could see all those gorgeous uniforms, "Hey, I am in red, fire at me!". This went on till midnight when all the church bells around started ringing and they retreated back to camp, drums beating and tin whistles too. On a more sobering note, more than 30,000 had lost their lives in eight hours in that battle and there were still corpses in the fields six months later.

Finally, I went on a school trip to the French military cemetery at Notre Dame de la Lorette and the Canadian memorial at Vimy where you can still see a reconstructed WWI trench. At Vimy the surrounding area is full of shell holes and is pitted like the surface of the moon but it still can not be mown because of unexploded shells so sheep keep the grass short. The surprise of the day was the

newly opened museum in Arras called *La carrière de Wellington* because of the New Zealand tunnelers who came to dig underground to reach the German frontline so that the British could launch a surprise attack during the battle of Arras, on April 9, 1917. The tunnels and the quarries all have New Zealand names.



The school children liked the quarry best because we went down 25 metres below the city in a lift and had to wear headphones for the guided visit, which started with a poem by Owen:

*"It seemed that out of the battle I escaped  
Down some profound dull tunnel, long since  
scooped ..."*

The story of the tunnels and life underground was a multimedia event with pictures and films

**Historical highlight:** *Le forum de Bagacum (Bavay).*

projected onto the tunnel walls. The maze of tunnels opened at times into huge caves with entrances and exits was a multimedia event with pictures and films projected everywhere. The remains of the numbers identifying each tunnel and cross-road could still be seen together with soldiers' graffiti and various bits of military paraphernalia retrieved from under the stones.

Our guide in the depths of the earth under Arras was very proud of the town's connection with the Antipodes.

All over this part of France there are beautifully kept military cemeteries and war memorials.

Respect for the dead and gratitude for the sacrifices made by both soldiers and civilians continue "*chez les Ch'tis*".

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# HABLAD, SÍ – IT'S NEVER TOO LATE

How professional development opportunities have enhanced learning for a group of Spanish students in rural New Zealand

By Clare Ravenscroft

Spanish teacher, Te Awamutu College

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I am a language teacher who probably has more years to reflect on than to plan ahead for! I would also describe myself as a less-than-fluent language teacher who operates as the sole teacher of International language. What I feel compelled to share is the impact of some amazing professional-development opportunities presented during the past couple of years, and how those opportunities have triggered a complete change in our Spanish programme.

I fell into French teaching many years ago after a long-serving part-time teacher retired. A call in January from a desperate principal saw me exploring French language teaching after some years teaching English and Social Studies.

I am in my second year of teaching Spanish. For the first year I was grateful for the Sí programme. At the beginning of this year, it became clear the students coming from Year 8 Spanish needed something different. I am forever thankful for the professional development experiences that allowed me to confidently step out.

So what have these experiences been?

- The New Zealand Correspondence School provided me with a Level 1 Spanish course, which enabled me to learn and work at the same time. I just loved the learning because it was formal, like my own schooling, but the focus was so much more communicative.

- A TRCC Language Programme "On the Crest of a Wave" at Raglan two years ago was a great motivator for integrating other curriculum areas into language teaching. It was there that I listened to a Year 7-8 teacher describing an environmental unit about the ocean that she did in German.

I felt inspired to use a local resource Maungatautari Ecological Island and a rich question: "How can we as Year 9 students with six months' Spanish support Spanish speaking visitors to the mountain?".

The students came up with solutions and even got to try them out with a Spanish visitor. The learning included New Zealand native birds and plants and descriptions in Spanish. The students said it was a great way to learn.

- The Ministry of Education-funded Second Language Programme in 2008 introduced me to Ellis' principles and some deeper thinking about the content of our courses. I found the year-long programme, especially the observation feedback and the encouragement to implement the principles, a real confidence boost.

- The New Zealand Curriculum unit provided for Spanish entitled El Apartamento was the final ingredient in this recipe for change. If the students could set up an apartment, why couldn't they do a virtual trip to Spain?

- Waikato Association of Language Teachers' Langsem, a biennial one-day sharing of research and best practice has provided further time for reflection and programme development.

And so, this year we are trialing co-constructing the six-month programme. With the help of Youtube we are doing a virtual trip to Spain. Time has been spent preparing ourselves to travel overseas; we have learned a mihi in Spanish, farewelled family at the airport, eaten fabada on the plane, had a stopover in Los Angeles and chosen which Spanish city we will live in. We will now use the internet to locate an apartment, set it up with furniture, buy groceries online, describe our neighbours...and we are planning an "in-school fieldtrip" (low cost) so we can spend a whole day communicating in Spanish.

I have always enjoyed teaching but this is what I have always dreamed of. The students are living their learning. I wish I still had a teaching lifetime ahead of me!

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# TOP AWARD FOR BEST-LOVED TEACHER

Luba Roth, winner of the inaugural  
Chinese Teaching Excellence Award 2009

By Jo Guthrie

Regional Languages Advisor, based in Christchurch

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Luba Roth is one of the best-loved language teachers in Christchurch and a loyal and hard-working NZALT member whose contributions to langsems, conferences, International Languages Week events and the organisation of sumptuous meals are legendary. NZALT Canterbury members congratulate her on this prestigious award.

Luba was born in Xinjian, in northwest China. Her mother was half Russian and half Chinese, her father was Chinese, from Shanghai, and so she grew up speaking both Russian and Chinese. In the 1950s, a difficult time for Christians in China, they had the opportunity to leave China, and Luba's mother decided to move the family to France. Luba then learnt French and worked for IBM in Paris. An opportunity to visit an old friend who had moved to New Zealand widened her languages horizons even further, as on that trip she met her future husband, Eddie, who is from Munich.

They married in Sydney and lived for a time in Australia, then they moved back to Christchurch - a culture shock for Luba who found herself living in a city full of people who ate potatoes every day and watched TV all the time instead of going out to cafés, concerts and operas. She missed the Champs Elysées at first, but has grown to love the mountains, beaches, rivers and parks of her new home.

A friend at the Alliance Française encouraged Luba to consider becoming a languages teacher so she studied Chinese, Russian, French and German at Canterbury University.

She began teaching French and German in a number of Christchurch schools, and then in 1995 she was invited to set up Chinese programmes at

St Margaret's College and Shirley Boys' High School. She has been at St Margaret's ever since.

Luba says she feels as if she has spent all her life learning languages - "If it's not one language, it's another". As well as the obvious benefits of learning about a new culture and meeting new people, Luba feels knowing many languages has made her more tolerant, more understanding and less likely to jump to conclusions. She says languages have enriched her life.

Luba says it's important for Kiwi students to learn an international language because of our geographic isolation. There aren't many civilised countries today that are monolingual.



Dedicated: Luba Roth says languages have enriched her life.

One reason it's important to learn Chinese is because of the Chinese economy. We need to learn their language so we can negotiate with them. For people who disagree with their human rights policies, it's even more important to know their language and culture. Chinese history goes back 6000 years; they're not going to listen to people who don't know their culture. If you can speak the language and know the culture you have an opportunity to talk about these things.

Taking students to China, which she does regularly, has been a highlight of Luba's teaching career - seeing them bargaining in the market place, ordering dishes in a restaurant and phoning home from the Great Wall to tell parents back in New Zealand, "I'm on the top of the world".

Knowing five languages, Luba feels she is in a good position to assert that Chinese is not the most difficult language to learn. There are no articles,

Chinese nouns do not have gender and there are no cases to learn. Verbs do not need to be conjugated and tense is indicated simply by a time marker. There are no plurals. Admittedly there still are thousands of characters to learn, but that's all part of the challenge...

Luba says a good teacher has to be passionate, stress the positive aspects to learning a language and accept it won't happen overnight - but the rewards are worth the effort. Here are some words of wisdom from Luba:

#### The ten most important Chinese sayings

The following often kept me humble and taught me how to assist my students in their studies:

##### 人生十最

一. 人生最大的敌人是自己。

1. The worst enemy in life is oneself.

二. 人生最大的成就是谦虚。

2. The highest achievement in life is modesty.

三. 人生最大的财富是健康。

3. The highest wealth in life is to have good health.

四. 人生最大的错误是自弃。

4. The biggest mistake in life is to give up without trying.

五. 人生最大的愚昧是自私。

5. The most foolish thing in life is to be selfish.

六. 人生最大的幸福是知足。

6. The highest blessing in life is contentment.

七. 人生最大的快乐是布施。

7. The happiest thing in life is being charitable.

八. 人生最大的知识是自知。

8. The highest wisdom in life is self-knowledge.

九. 人生最大的美德是准时。

9. The highest virtue in life is being punctual.

十. 人生最大的幸福是轻松。

10. The most joy[ful thing] in life is being flexible.

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# LET'S TAKE PART

## The Japanese tea house visit

By Reiko Smithers

Japanese teacher in charge, Spotswood College (New Plymouth)

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Spotswood College tried to do many things throughout the year, and pushed on keeping the five key competencies at the forefront. It's so pleasing to see the students' enthusiasm and socio-cultural interest. This is my report about my Japanese classes' activities so far.

In February it was "Let's have a go at a Japanese tea ceremony!". I led students to experience this in a newly built authentic tea house in New Plymouth.

In March, "Let's host Japanese students!". We warmly welcomed and hosted 16 students from the Mishima Youth Delegation from our sister city. Mayor Peter Tennent officially welcomed them. They stayed a week.

In August it was International Languages Week. So we celebrated this with "Let's wear a kimono!". Year 9-12 Japanese students dressed in kimono. Many more students wanted to wear one too, but we didn't have enough. Maybe next time our principal will wear one?!

In the same month, some of my language students visited Devon Intermediate School during International Languages Week. In assembly, my students demonstrated the use of animal sounds in English and then in Japanese. It certainly was very different and drew much attention. Our national language advisor Gunhild Litwin was dressed in traditional Dutch clothing to support us.

In September we celebrated International Film Festival Week with "Let's watch a Japanese film!".



From top left: Year 9-12 Japanese students dressed in kimono during International Languages Week; The Japanese Tea House in New Plymouth and students taking part in the tea ceremony.

I took my Year 11 and Year 12 students to see the Academy Award-winning foreign language film *Departure*.

Then we had "Let's eat sushi!". I took my students to a local sushi bar where we read the menu, practised Japanese table manners, spoke Japanese and used chopsticks.

Also in September, a group of 16 students from Nihon University visited and did calligraphy with my Year 9 students and had a picnic lunch on the grass with my senior students. They interacted well, building up my students' confidence in speaking Japanese.

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# MOTIVATING CHILDREN

## Lunch lessons from the Waikato Langsem

By Joaquim Gines

Second-year Bachelor of Education student,  
University of Auckland (Epsom campus)

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The LangSem in Waikato on September 4 was my first experience in a language seminar and it was worth the 150km from the Big Smoke to Hamilton. The seminars were great, but I learnt the most during the coffee and lunch breaks. Being surrounded by other language teachers was a great opportunity to talk and share all the boring "teacher stuff" friends and family don't want to listen to anymore.

It was during the lunch break that I met a group of experienced teachers speaking about different ways of motivating children into the language. I had my little plate with a few of those fancy little finger foods you get in these kinds of seminars and I thought it would be good to eat the kebabs and listen to the more experienced teachers.

The Spanish teacher, a very eloquent New Zealander, was speaking about SS Wrestling: "I hate it, I do; I just can't find the point of a group of weirdoes dressed in their undies pretending they are fighting, but I had to watch it. Some of the boys in my class love Rey Mysterio [Jr], one of the most popular wrestlers, so I had to watch hours of it and then get some of the interviews and comments in Spanish this Mexican wrestler did in the ring, and prepare an activity. The children loved it; it doesn't matter if you can't stand it because you have achieved the most important thing if you want to know their interest: enter in their world."

To my right at the table was a French teacher, a very cheerful young girl. She said not all the motivation activities had to be as painful as this. In her case she said she used a lot of singing.

"The children love it, singing anything that can help them remember vocabulary...It is important to bring music into the class. Ideally you use French or Spanish songs from France, Spain or Latin America because as you teach the language you also introduce the culture to the children. But translated songs from English to French or Spanish are also effective for the children, they know the



Rey Mysterio Jr: The children love him.

tune and the words in English so it is easier for them to remember and sing them. I have seen children singing in French in the corridor, c'est magnifique!"

As I was finishing my last kebab the Spanish teacher started talking again. She told us about a wonderful activity she had done with her children. "We did a treasure hunt in Spanish outside the classroom. Learning outside is a bonus for the children as normally they work inside for too many hours. The game starts with some clues in Spanish, which take them to the next clue, and so on until they find the treasure, which is also something Spanish like a book or a CD that is the starter of the new lesson."

After the experience I realised I had learned from so many different experiences during the lunch break

that I would like to suggest the organisers include the healthy Spanish habit of the *sobremesa* in the next seminars.

*Sobremesa* consists of having a long lunch along with long, long chats. If *sobremesa* works, maybe for next time we could even include a Spanish *siesta*.

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# WHAT HAVE I GOT IN MY BOX OF TRICKS?

## Classroom activities

By Jo Rittey

Co-ordinator of Languages Faculty, Head of French,  
Rangi Ruru College (Christchurch)

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This is a condensed version of a session I gave at the Canterbury Langsem. Many of these ideas won't be new but I have put a few together as often I go to langsems and conferences and I may have heard an idea before but forgotten it, or the presenter talks about it in a different way and it gives me inspiration. So if one person is reminded of an idea or takes away something new, then that's great! I owe three of these ideas, the pepeha, mon ami imaginaire et le langage des signes to Manu Menard of St. Matthew's in Masterton. Manu generously shared these and many other ideas about task-based teaching during a two day visit I made in May. Thank you to Manu and all the other teachers whose ideas I have collected along the way and love to use.

### Speed-dating

I know you all know about this already...so just a reminder. It's a great way to start a lesson or if you have some time at the end of a lesson.

Students sit in two evenly matched lines facing each other. Give them a topic, such as what I did at the weekend, or a film I have seen recently. Give them a short time - 30, 40 or 60 seconds - where they talk about that topic to the person opposite and then listen to what the other person has to say. Then stop them and make one line move

along one so there is a new person in front of them. Repeat. You can do it several times and each time their confidence grows, so by the end they are speaking quite fluently and have also listened to French.

### Echanger les potins

Another lesson starter, which is better for Year 13 as it uses reported speech. Ask the students to think about what they did at the weekend. They tell their neighbour. Then their neighbour tells them. Then tell them it is gossip time. The

students have to find someone else to gossip to: "Hé, devine ce que Zoe m'a dit...elle m'a dit qu'elle avait mangé un gateau entier pendant le week-end. Pas de blague." It's good if you can model it with exaggerated frenchi-ness with phrases such as "Non, ce n'est pas vrai" or "Oh là là, mais qu'est-ce que tu racontes?".

[www.wordle.net](http://www.wordle.net)

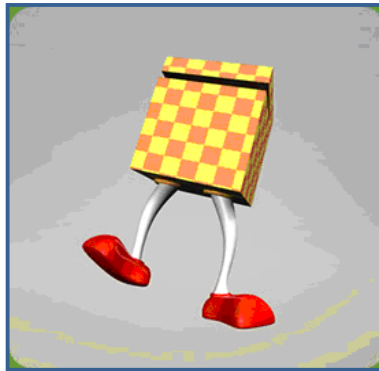
Wordle is a programme that creates word clouds. You cut and paste text into the box and then it creates an image using the words. The words with the highest frequency appear larger. So there are two ways this can be used:

a) I used it with Year 9 as a step towards talking about themselves and then about their petit ami idéal. Have the students think about words that would sum them up - so adjectives, colours, seasons, school subjects and some verbs would be good for variety. I asked mine to think of 12 words

and then rank them in importance. Then they have to type them into a word document with their name about 20 times, and the other words in diminishing amounts, so that they will be different sizes. They then cut and paste this into the text box in wordle and push "Go". They can alter the layout, colours and font and can randomise the pattern until

they are happy. Then they can print them off. From there, I got them to classify the words into nouns, verbs and adjectives and then write sentences. I gave them a model of Je suis sociable, J'aime nager, J'adore le français. They based their sentences on that, practising using the different structures with different kinds of words. Then they had to use that model to write about mon petit ami idéal, which they made into a poster for homework.

b) With seniors, they can cut and paste writing into the text and then see which words come up as



most frequently used (the larger ones). They can then go into <http://dictionnaire.tv5.org/> and using the Synonymes function, they can learn some different ways of saying things.

### Mon ami imaginaire

To begin the activity, I usually model what I expect the students to do. I will stand in front of the class and pretend to be putting my arm around someone – mon ami imaginaire. I will then introduce this friend in French to the class by saying:

“Il s'appelle Johnny. Il a les yeux bruns et les cheveux noirs. Il habite en France et il est acteur. Il est assez grand et hyper-sympa. Il aime regarder les films. Sa nourriture préférée est le chocolat et il adore les fruits de mer.”

I then ask students to give back a full description of mon ami imaginaire. Once this is done, I ask the students to create their own ami imaginaire - they must include a name and four or five details.

Have the students stand up and find another student to talk to and then present to that student the ami imaginaire they have just created. They must ensure the student to whom they have just presented their ami can remember ALL the details. Once done the other student describes her/his ami. Then have the students move again - but this time they are all carrying around a totally new ami imaginaire (!) - the one their classmate just introduced them to. They now have to present this friend to a different classmate and vice-versa, rotating four or five times exchanging friends.

### Pepeha/mihi mihi

Intercultural: using the mihi mihi format to talk about themselves in Māori and French

Ko ngā Kā- puke- māeroero oku maunga  
= Mes montagnes s'appellent les alpes du sud

Ko Ōtakaro toku awa  
= Ma rivière s'appelle Avon

Ko Ōtautahi toku whenua  
= Je viens de Christchurch

Ko Brian raua ko Trish oku mātua  
= Mes parents s'appellent Brian et Trish

He kaiako ahau i te kura o Rangi Ruru  
= Je suis professeur à l'école de filles Rangi Ruru

Ko Jo toku ingoa  
= Je m'appelle Jo

### Le langage des signes

Again, intercultural, in a way, in that you are getting the students to consider sign language and could have a discussion about different forms of communication. I did it with Year 12 in my quasi-traditional story unit, as this is a way of telling a story.

...[I t's] intercultural, in a way, in that you are getting the students to consider sign language and could have a discussion about different forms of communication.

I started by giving them the links below and assigned a few words to each student to learn the signs. They then had to teach the class and give the French word and sign. Then we watched the video:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=urh3zos090o>

without sound and they had to recognise the sign and write down the French word. Then they listened to the whole song and had to fill in the gaps.

You wouldn't want to spend more than one period on this, but it's a lovely song and the signing is beautiful and it does provide the opportunity for comparison/reflecting on a different language and how we communicate.

Allez à:

<http://www.lsfplus.fr/dico.htm>

[www.glogster.com](http://www.glogster.com)

Create an online, interactive poster...students can insert pictures, text, video, music. My Year 13s made one each when they found out about a significant event. They then had to look at each other's as their weekly homework and for each glogster, they had to think of a comment or a question for the author.

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# CONNECTING STUDENTS WITH NATIVE SPEAKERS

## Argentina and New Zealand video conference link

By Sita Bakker

Spanish teacher, Westmount School (Auckland)

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Learning languages is not always easy and often other subjects are perceived to be more important in New Zealand. But globally, learning a foreign language is a very important part of the curriculum as many countries do business and trade in neighbouring countries. Hopefully with the new curriculum in New Zealand we can be very much a part of this global community.

One way of doing this is to create opportunities to build relationships with the countries that speak the languages being taught in our school.

We have been teaching French successfully at Westmount School for many years, and in recent years Spanish has flourished. Prior to 2007, Westmount taught all the language face to face. In 2007, Spanish was introduced to Westmount at NCEA level 1 via video conference classes. In 2008, we had a trial of video conference classes for Year 7/8. Spanish proved to be very successful.

Languages are still growing and will continue to do so with the support of the teachers and trustees. One event that took place in week seven at Westmount will ensure this growth. Westmount had its first video conference class link with Argentina. Year 9/10 Waitaki Campus, Year 10 Manawatu Campus and Year 11 students from Tasman participated in a video conference class with three campuses in Argentina - Buenos Aires, Bahía Blanca and Rosario.

The New Zealand students spent a number of video conference (VC) classes preparing and practising questions for students in Argentina. The two students from the Tasman campus did an excellent job of presenting our students from Manawatu and Waitaki to the Argentinean students.

After all our students' questions were answered the Argentinean students were also very keen to ask questions, which proved a little more challenging for our students.

Here are some comments from students in New Zealand and Argentina.

### New Zealand students' comments

"Both students from Tasman found the experience very, very interesting and enjoyed the opportunity to meet their peers from Argentina. They are both very excited about the possibility of meeting them again on VC."

"I would like to do that again."

"They spoke quite fast."

"Enjoyed it a lot."

### Comments from students in Argentina after the VC link with New Zealand

"As regards the experience we had on June 8, I could say it was very good, I really liked meeting other students from campuses in New Zealand. It was very interesting to hear the Spanish they are all learning. I would like this event to be repeated."

"We had a very good time with the teacher and all of you. It was a very good experience for us and your campuses, because we could speak in our language and also listen to you speaking it. I would like to congratulate all those that participated in that meeting, and, trust me, you are learning Spanish very well. You demonstrated you are able to ask questions very fluently.

Besides, I would like to encourage every learner to keep going, and congratulate your teacher for her effort and patience with you and us.

We hope to see you again. Kind regards."

"I only wanted to let you all know that we are very pleased with the outcome of the VC conference we had. I wish we had this type of event more often.

Good luck with learning Spanish. Hope to see you soon."

(These comments have not been edited.)

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# LANGUAGES TAKE YOU PLACES

## Language teaching and learning in Second Life

By Jo Rittey

Co-ordinator of Languages Faculty, Head of French,  
Rangi Ruru College (Christchurch)

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Learning Languages is the eighth and newest curriculum area in the New Zealand Curriculum. And, as we know, the curriculum supports e-learning or information and communication technology as a means to supplement traditional ways of teaching and open up new and different ways of learning. This is perfect for learning languages as Information Communications Technology (ICT) can help students make connections, overcome barriers of distance and time, learn about other cultures and hear native speakers of the target language.

There are two aspects to this article. One involves thinking about the students in front of us and the next generation coming through. They are different to us. They live in a different world to the world we lived in when we were teenagers. That seems to mean they learn differently. It is important, then, that we provide them with opportunities that will allow them to learn in an optimum and appropriate environment. The other aspect involves looking critically at the use of Second Life software in the language classroom, and more specifically looking at the ways in which it could enhance language learning by opening up the classroom walls.

We have in front of us the end of the Generation alphabet as we will soon be educating Generation Z, those born from 2005 onwards. We currently have Generation Y before us, those born between 1974 and 2004. It is important to be mindful of the fact that many of those teaching Generation Y and Z are either Generation Xers or Baby Boomers, brought up in a different era with different educational, vocational and social needs.

We've been told Generation Y, or the new generation, grew up on technology and that they rely on it to perform better; they are confident, ambitious, strong-willed and passionate. And they are. They also need references. They need lots of

feedback and guided supervision. Without reference points, this generation will get lost. If you create a virtual environment with no boundaries and regulations, it becomes far less respectful or conducive to the individuals inside it.

This generation has an energy, a vibrancy that without something to vibrate against, discipline or boundaries, they are loose cannons. The nature of the virtual environment could create this. You could find individuals lost in space. Their imagination, their intrigue and their ideas extended but perhaps overly extended because there is no boundary.

**This generation has an energy, a vibrancy that without something to vibrate against, discipline or boundaries, they are loose cannons. The nature of the virtual environment could create this. You could find individuals lost in space.**

Excitement about web 2.0 and its flexibility is leading the charge. But what is the determining factor or factors that will instill ability in an individual, and allow them to achieve? What is the reference point to know if someone has achieved? It could be endless. As teachers, we need to establish the reference so that when the students are in the virtual world they can create or project and then return to you with a product or outcome. Specific goals and tasks are essential. The role of the educator is to provide the references. We will be unable to move education forward without understanding what it means to give

our students a 21st century education - not just the fireworks-side of this education, but the enduring skills and tools they will take into the future.

Language learners have two communities of learning: the learning community in the classroom and the target language community. In many cases in New Zealand classes, communication occurs within the classroom, and is largely teacher-initiated. I am exploring how Second Life can open up the classroom, providing a broader range of opportunities for authentic and varied language interaction.

Second Life is an online 3D virtual world. Users assume an online identity - an "avatar" - to represent themselves within the Second Life community. I discovered Second Life through reading about a Language Teachers' Virtual conference which was to be held in Second Life in May. To attend the conference I had to become a citizen of Second Life. This meant creating an avatar, choosing a name for it, designing my appearance then learning how to walk, fly, teleport and communicate with others. I have enough problems in my first life, so entering a second one was bound to be fraught.

My avatar is called Amélie Rebane. The first session I "attended" was given by a presenter from Glasgow demonstrating how she used Second Life with her ESOL learners. She stood at the front of the amphitheatre and delivered her presentation, complete with a virtual slideshow. She had a microphone and talked using real voice. If the audience had questions or wanted to answer her questions, we could type in the chat field and our words appeared on the screen. I was surrounded by avatars from Singapore, Colombia, Hong Kong, the United Kingdom and the United States - mostly ESOL teachers. About 300 people attended the conference during the course of the weekend.

It seems a lot of the hype surrounding Second Life has died down and the people who still remain excited about its potential are largely educators - because the potential is enormous for educators, and particularly for language teachers. There's the possibility of authentic interaction with target language speakers, there are intercultural benefits, it's a venue for language classes and a networking opportunity for educators.

But Second Life is for adults 18 and over. There is a teen grid for those under 18 but adults are not allowed in unless they are educators who have been authenticated. I started searching for educational groups and discovered Skoolaborate.

Skoolaborate is a global initiative, using a blend of technologies including blogs, online learning, wikis and "virtual worlds" to transform learning. The aim is to use these tools to provide collaborative learning experiences for students aged between 13 and 17. These blended experiences are used to make learning more meaningful and engaging.

The virtual learning space is secure and only accessible via invitation. Students from schools around the world are invited to participate by their teachers who themselves have been through a process involving a police check and acceptance

## ...The potential is enormous for educators, and particularly for language teachers.

onto the programme. Skoolaborate now has 30 schools and organisations from Australia, New Zealand, Taiwan, Japan, Singapore, Chile, Portugal, the UK and the US.

Excitement aside, when thinking of technology, we must think of pedagogy first. What am I teaching? Too often technology is used without appropriate reflection and pedagogical foundation.

When it comes to designing a programme of learning for second-language learners there are three basic questions to be answered and these are the same questions that can be posed before embarking on a task within Skoolaborate:

- What specific language-learning goals do we want the language learner to have achieved?
- How can we design and organise educational activities to motivate and support learners into reaching these language-learning goals?
- How will we assess and follow up the students' learning processes and outcomes?

Second Life, or Skoolaborate, can be used for learning and teaching activities including, but not limited to, the types of tasks carried out in classroom-based tasks: individual, pair or group work, tasks focused on one of the language skills, formal readings, group/class reading and analysis of written texts, PowerPoint presentations, video projections, listening to recordings, formal debate and questions, informal questions.

### Possible tasks:

Introductions – introducing your own avatar to other avatars or to the class; dressing your avatar to represent a stereotypical image of your/the other's culture and discussing it with other members; discussion of cultural topics; asking and giving directions; touring Skoolaborate and finding specific places then reporting back with directions on how to get there; interviewing other avatars.

One of the most valuable things we can give learners is the ability to make the most of their language despite its deficiencies. And the best way to do this is to give them plenty of authentic opportunities to use their language inside and outside the classroom.

I have always maintained that "languages take you places"...where will we go next?

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# VIRTUAL EXCHANGE

## Using Web 2.000 tools and other communication technologies in Learning Languages

By Emma Souch

HOD Languages and French teacher, Waimea College (Nelson)

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In 2008 I embarked on some action research to find out whether students would be more motivated to produce written and/or spoken texts on various topics in French if their audience was a school in a French-speaking country they were communicating with via a jointly developed wiki. This virtual exchange would also cover the criteria for an Education for Enterprise (E4E) activity where "students are actively engaged in learning opportunities that are both relevant to real life and authentic". Also, according to Ellis (2005), successful language learning requires extensive opportunities for output and it is sustained output that is necessary rather than controlled practice exercises. The use of the wiki as a publishing and communication tool would offer plenty of opportunity for this sort of language production.

### The Project

Thanks to the National French Advisor Ruth Bouchier we connected with a secondary school called Lycée Frédéric Mistral in Fresnes just outside Paris and I made email contact with an English teacher from the school.

Year 10 French students created a wiki which included information about their school and school life in New Zealand. They added pictures and wrote descriptions which were uploaded onto the wiki. Short video clips were created and embedded on the pages. They also asked the French students questions which they wrote on a page then the French students added their replies on the same page and also uploaded pictures. We also added podcasts from the students' prepared talks about their school and school life in New Zealand. Learning new language in lessons took on a new meaning as students were aware they would use this to communicate and publish via the wiki.

Although the students were more motivated producing language to put up on the wiki in the end this project was not as successful as it could have been because the French students did not add as much to the wiki or interact as much as the New Zealand students had hoped. Problems with access to technology and a reticence with

Information Communications Technology (ICT) from both the French students and their teacher seemed to hold them back.

But the majority of students did enjoy using the technology to create the wiki and seeing their work published. Using this technology in language learning seemed to motivate them because:

- It helps you apply it to everyday life and it is fun most of the time
- It is something our generation can relate to and use easily
- We have to remember some of the French verbs without being able to check back in our books
- It makes it more exciting and you do enough writing in other classes
- You can send podcasts and movie clips
- Editing our pages was new and creative
- Writing on the pages forced us to remember how to link words, and so forth.

The students felt they had learnt something about life and culture in the country of the language they were learning:

- It lets us hear from them (French students) instead of listening to a teacher tell us
- It gives a chance to meet people via internet who speak the language we are learning
- We learnt about what their school looked like (through shared pictures)
- We get to learn about real French people.

But the students were disappointed by the lack of interaction from the French students:

- It isn't that great because they haven't replied.

Following some of this positive feedback I decided I wanted to try and use the idea of a wiki again but find a partner school that was more pro-active and would interact more readily with my students. This time I involved a Year 12 group because they had a bit more language which would perhaps make communication easier.

The Nelson regional E4E co-ordinator Murray Turner suggested I try a French school in Quebec.

He supplied a contact at Collège Sainte-Anne de Lachine in Montreal. Fortunately this school was very keen and arranged a group of six students (girls aged 15-17) and a teacher to be involved in the project to interact via a wiki even during their long summer break (June to August).

Again I created the shell for the wiki using the free online website [www.wikispaces.com](http://www.wikispaces.com) and invited all of the Year 12 class to become members. The students from Collège Sainte-Anne were also invited as members. We worked on the topic "Relationships with family and friends" and the students wrote profiles about themselves and their families on the wiki pages. The French-Canadian teacher and I also set up discussion questions in French and in English, for example "Parents, war or peace?" and "What is more important to you, friends or family?". Students in both countries posted their thoughts in French and in English.

It was amazing to see the New Zealand students producing the target language freely and communicating their ideas despite language errors. At times the students would need to explain cultural and language differences. The New Zealand students also discovered that the French Canadians used language and vocabulary particular to Quebec.

Although they spent only one lesson per week in the computer room adding to the wiki several Year 12 New Zealand girls started communicating outside of lessons in the evenings and weekends. They also added podcasts, describing best friends and what qualities were important in a best friend. Other content created included an "Agony Aunt" page for problems and advice (CL7 objective) and discussion topics about the differences between New Zealand and Canada, as well as future plans (CL7 objective).

In August the New Zealand students prepared questions to ask the French Canadians and for two weeks they used Skype in the classroom to ask their questions and listen to replies. The video link could be seen by the whole class via the projector. This gave the project a sense of reality as the New Zealand students could actually see the Québécois students they were communicating with.

One New Zealand student commented following the Skype call, "It feels like we have actually met them now". Students who were previously reticent about speaking out in class were happy to come up to the laptop at the front of the class and ask their questions even if it was only "As-tu vu un ours blanc?" (Have you seen a polar bear?).

...It was amazing to see the New Zealand students producing the target language freely and communicating their ideas despite errors in language.

The Year 12 French class was overwhelmingly positive about the project, using the wiki and Skype to communicate, and they clearly felt it was worthwhile because:

- We had to use all the language when writing and talking, not just one topic, so it was more like real life
- It was hard but good because we realised we could say quite a lot
- We learnt heaps about life in Canada in a French school
- The wiki was like what we do anyway on Facebook and Bebo and MSN so it was more fun than just writing in class
- We might get to go to their school and they might come to ours
- It meant I could get help with my French from someone at home
- We didn't realise they had such different accents - they sounded cool.

It is important to realise that this technology is surprisingly easy to use. I am in no way an ICT whiz and definitely learnt as I went along. The students were helpful with trouble-shooting and while some knew lots already others also gained new skills in the process. As one girl put it, "It was really annoying trying to get the podcasts and video up but now I know how to embed sound files and YouTube videos onto web pages".

The outcome of the connection with Collège Sainte-Anne is that a group of students and a teacher are planning a trip to Nelson and will be hosted by Waimea College students. Collège Sainte-Anne has made contact with the principal of Waimea College and it is hoped a long-term partnership will be created.

Finally, I will continue to integrate this type of technology into the classroom to communicate with French-speaking communities outside New Zealand. It encourages students to produce written and spoken texts for real purpose, a real audience and increases motivation to produce language.

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# WALLWISHER

## A very handy communication tool

By Estelle Seaman

French teacher, Rangitoto College (Auckland)

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On Monday, September 7 I attended an e-Learning course run by Dawn Jarbeau at the Kohia Teachers Centre. I tried out one of the ideas the very next day and found it to be so useful I thought I'd pass it on to you.

Using the site [www.wallwisher.com](http://www.wallwisher.com) I have set up an interactive communication site where my students can post "stickies" on a wall – questions and comments everyone can read and from which everyone can benefit.

I started with my Year 11 class and, to test out the process, I posted five stickies each with a short sentence to translate. For homework, the students were to choose one sentence and, in a sticky of their own, translate it (double-click on the wall to open a new sticky). Needless to say four students didn't do it at all and one student chose all five sentences...but the results were great.

I marked the sentences in stickies of my own and could post comments as well. Everyone's work and comments could be viewed by all.

The interesting part of this exercise, from a teacher's point of view, was to watch how students who worked after some answers had already been posted had obviously "copied" other students' translations and tried to correct the errors. This error-correction process is just as useful as the translation itself and is a wonderful spin-off of the interactive nature of the site.

We then went on to the next level – exam preparation. By the end of the second day that the students were out of class I had

- provided instructions on how to make their own vocabulary list on Language Perfect

- provided a practice writing task
- provided information about how to go about emailing their writing to me for marking and emailing back
- shared a joke or two about their camp photos which I had posted on my website.

### Some comments

The site is not secure, so keep an eye out for what I call "graffiti" – believe it or not the odd rogue sticky has appeared, nothing offensive but certainly not posted by one of my students.

Messages are limited to 160 characters, so documents like my vocabulary list instructions and the practice writing task (mentioned above) needed to be uploaded onto a website (your school website possibly) and a link copied and pasted into the "link bar" at the bottom of the sticky.

Alternatively it is sufficient to simply give an instruction as to where the document can be found if it is on a secure website, such as a school website.

It is important to clean the wall quite often, especially during busy times.

The "openness" of this forum for discussion means all students who choose to visit it benefit equally – there is no one-on-one

assistance given.

My sortie into the realm of stickies is in its early days, but I can see the potential of this site particularly during exams.

It would be wonderful if other teachers who use it would share their ideas and experiences on the listserv.

[Click here for next article](#)

# MOTIVATION, BELIEFS, EXPECTATIONS

## An evaluation of three Spanish language courses

By Carlos Gonzalez-Tunon

The Correspondence School of New Zealand

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A well-designed educational programme is of the utmost importance for effective learning. Consequently, evaluating programmes in terms of learners' beliefs and expectations is important if the programmes are to contribute to learning. This is particularly crucial in distance programmes where most learners work independently.

Kiely and Rea-Dickins (2005) consider that language programme evaluation "is part of the novice teacher's checklist", "a process of determining [...] student satisfaction". This paper argues that programme evaluation should not only be the concern of novice teachers, but of all teachers since student satisfaction is crucial in encouraging student motivation, which plays a central role in effective learning. This article will explore this issue by analysing participant responses to a programme evaluation questionnaire focusing on student motivation, the design of the learning booklets and overall impressions of three distance Spanish language programmes.

### Introduction

The Correspondence School is the leading institution in distance education in New Zealand and is highly regarded for the quality of its courses. The development of courses undergoes rigorous pedagogical and design scrutiny. But courses are not always formally evaluated by learners.

Given that courses are developed for learners, it is important they be evaluated in some way.

For this reason, the author, a Spanish teacher and

the teacher in charge of the Spanish Section at The Correspondence School, embarked on the evaluation of the three senior Spanish language programmes offered by the school in the hope that the evaluation would provide information on students' beliefs about the effectiveness of the courses, particularly the extent to which they met students' needs and expectations. Each of these elements is crucial in the impact it can have on student motivation and engagement in learning.

The evaluation was conducted in two parts; this paper presents the results of the first part which aimed at gathering data on student motivation, the students' overall impressions of the courses and their reactions to the design of the learning booklets. It was hoped the results would indicate how well the courses met the students' needs and expectations, and also identify aspects of the design of the booklets that could be improved.

The second part of the study seeks to evaluate the teaching on the course and to determine to what extent the students consider that the course helps them with their learning. This should provide an indication of how pedagogically sound the course is. The results of this second part of the evaluation will be presented in another paper (forthcoming).

The paper is divided into four parts. The first part provides background information on the courses and then describes the methodology adopted. The third part presents the results and discussion, and the final section provides conclusions and recommendations.

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# PARLEZ-VOUS FRANÇAIS?

## Improving students' pronunciation of the target language

By Leisha Lecointre

French teacher, Palmerston North Boys' High School

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This article was written for the 2008 Technology in Language Learning project, funded by the New Zealand Ministry of Education. Here is a shortened version.

Teaching correct pronunciation to students is a vexing issue and often has low priority in the language-learning classroom. But this is an area where tried and proven methods can make a huge difference, giving students enormous confidence and the teacher a sense of real satisfaction.

### What question were you asking?

Does feedback using recordings of students' conversations improve fluency and pronunciation?

### Why is the question important?

A fundamental problem among all second-language learners is pronunciation. My Year 9 students are particularly concerned with the need to pronounce words correctly in order not to offend the person they are speaking to. Form is the major issue here, according to Ellis' principles 3, 8 and 2 (Ellis, 2005).

### What is the context for the research?

The setting is a Year 9 class of 31 male students in a decile 9 all-boys school, some of whom have done French at intermediate and even primary levels. Of 30 responses to a survey concerning their prior experience and knowledge of French, 15 said they had no previous experience of the language and 15 had varying levels of experience. When asked whether they thought correct pronunciation was important, no correlation was found between the number of years they had been learning French and their desire to pronounce French correctly.

Up until the start of this project, pronunciation was taught by repetition of vocabulary and formulaic expressions in class. When students came to role play situations after having practised vocabulary beforehand, little or no transfer was found. That is, students forgot how to pronounce the vocabulary correctly within context. There was an over-reliance on written text and little or no spontaneity in speech. Students received little feedback so they

did not learn necessarily from their mistakes, or else they quickly forgot how the vocabulary was pronounced.

How did you go about answering the question?

Baseline data includes teacher perceptions of achievement so far. There is a significant difference between comprehensibility and correct pronunciation which would be easily understood by a native speaker of French. According to Neri (2001): "[...] It is fundamental that a distinction be drawn between accentedness and intelligibility." Quite clearly the aim in a Year 9 beginners class is not to produce native speakers of French but students who are able to make themselves understood easily. To this end, emphasis was placed on learning individual words in isolation, then within context. Some emphasis on correct intonation was also made. This methodology is supported by Wipf (1985): "Experience has shown that ability to pronounce critical sounds correctly and with ease in isolation is crucial."

Previous oral assessments provide some indication of achievement in pronunciation. Some students scored much lower than they should because they could not correctly pronounce the vocabulary necessary to introduce themselves.

In order to provide one means of improving these results, I undertook the following steps using digital recordings:

A prepared passage based on a fictitious character was presented to the class, which included vocabulary taught during the first two terms of the year. Here is the passage:

#### Je me présente

Je m'appelle Étienne Deroux et j'ai quatorze ans. J'habite près de Nantes, en Bretagne. J'ai deux frères: ils ont onze et sept ans. Mes parents sont professeurs à l'université. Au collège j'étudie le français, l'anglais, les mathématiques, les sciences, l'histoire géographie, l'éducation physique, la musique et les arts plastiques. J'adore l'école. Le weekend, j'aime faire du vélo et aller en ville mais je déteste faire mes devoirs. J'aime ma vie.

The teacher read through the passage in class and went over individual words. Instructions were given to students to record themselves on a laptop or MP3 player and then send the sound file to the teacher via email.

Once all students had emailed their individual sound file, the teacher then emailed a sound file of the passage correctly pronounced to all students with pauses to allow students to practise. After practising daily for approximately two weeks, the students then re-recorded themselves reading the same passage and sent their individual sound files via email to the teacher. The teacher then selected three lower and three average students to give feedback to and sent them individually a sound file pointing out strengths and weaknesses.

### What did you find?

Given that this is action research, the most startling discoveries were with the participants themselves. At the beginning of the project it was widely assumed by all teachers participating in the project that teenage students were technologically competent. My findings did not necessarily support this. Also, some students had no access to either a laptop computer or MP3 player. The lack of appropriate equipment was definitely a drawback to the success of this project.

Once all digital recordings were received the teacher sent the sound file of the reading to the students. This sound file lasted for approximately six minutes and consisted of practising individual vocabulary items with the teacher pronouncing the word then gaps for the student to practise, followed by a slow reading of the passage. Students were allowed more than two weeks to listen to and practise the reading.

Eight sound files were received in early September. Individual feedback was sent to these students.

My results were therefore based on those eight students who sent me both sound files.

### Results

All students who sent the two sound files showed improvement during the course of the project. A simple marking procedure was adhered to which involved counting the individual mistakes made by each student.

The most important factor appeared to be how much time the students spent listening to and practising reading the passage.

Early in term four, the eight students were asked to voluntarily fill in a questionnaire on the usefulness of the project. Seven students replied. A short summary of their responses follows.

The three most important questions were:

1. How did the technology changes help you to improve your pronunciation of French?
2. If you think there was no improvement in your learning, why was that?
3. What suggestions concerning this project do you have for your teacher and how could this aspect be improved?

For this first question, students highlighted two important ways in which the project helped them, namely through replay of the sound file (three responses) backed up with three more responses of "listening lots" and one other response of the student practising. One comment made was: "Being able to hear the words over and over again at the touch of a button was very useful."

Four positive responses were gained for the second question with all respondents saying they had improved. One student replied: "I think there was a massive improvement in my pronunciation." One student said he had not improved because he "did not work hard enough". In reply to the third question, one student suggested there be a longer focus to the project, another referred to the need for a listening laboratory to help improve pronunciation and two responses indicated there should be no changes to the project.

### What is the significance of what you found for your teaching?

There are three areas in which I would change my teaching, following on from this project. Firstly, I would begin the project in the first term and use a shorter piece of writing, perhaps focusing on the basic information taught in first term. This could then be worked on during a longer period, with the possibility of adding information as students' knowledge increased. More regular recording of students in class would be useful - it encourages students to listen to themselves speaking the target language.

One area I would consider carefully is that of how to encourage students with very poor pro-

...The most  
startling  
discoveries  
were with the  
students  
themselves.

nunciation to improve. According to Wipf, "Students with severe pronunciation problems should be helped in the privacy of an office rather than in the presence of peers [...]." Finding designated time outside of the normal class time is important for students who are unable to make themselves understood in the target language.

What further research will support the improvement in students' learning in this area?

It was clear that even a short-term focused project such as this did in fact help students to improve their pronunciation of French.

This is supported by Wipf: "Pronunciation will need to be taught and evaluated more systematically than has been the case in recent years if this aspect of L2 acquisition is to be taken seriously by

our students. [...] The results can be very gratifying since the ability to focus on a single aspect of a language can bring significant progress within a relatively short period of time."

This type of research can only be successful if the technology is readily available and students are well-versed in the use of it. Perhaps a pre-project survey should be made to ascertain students' actual knowledge of the use of technology.

A further question should be added to the research report to ascertain the amount of time students spent listening to the teacher's sound file. It was recommended they listen to and practise 10 minutes a day for two weeks, but the time students actually spent doing this was unknown.

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# A BIT OF HISTORY

## Sweden and the Swedish

By Ted Nye

Physician, Swedish tutor (Dunedin)

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To a Swede Sweden is Sverige, pronounced a bit like "Sveriyah". So, why Sverige?

It's a bit of history, going back to the time, a thousand years ago, when that part of Scandinavia was ruled by a few petty kingdoms, representing different tribes. One of the tribes was the Svea people. So the kingdom was Svea rike, the Kingdom of the Sveas. Given time this became Sverige.

To the west was Norway, the northern people. As has often happened languages crystallised and the language of Sweden, while sharing its north Germanic origins with Denmark and Norway, became modern Swedish.

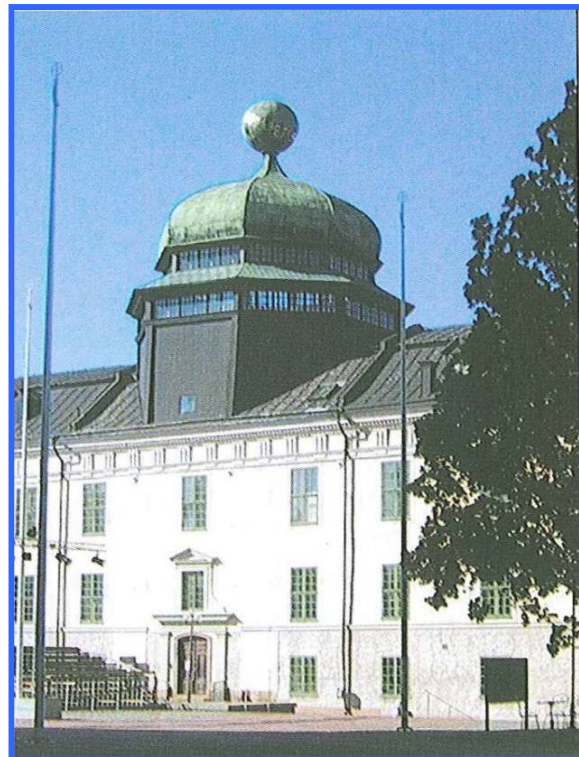
Modern Swedish is spoken by perhaps no more than 10 million people, with a significant group of Swedish-speaking Finns, concentrated in the Åland islands and on the Baltic coast of Finland.

An evening class in Swedish has been going on in Dunedin for close on twenty years. It is really a hobby for the two teachers, Barbara Johnston and myself, a former professional language teacher who has lived in Sweden.

It is perhaps a matter of surprise that every year new students appear who are interested in learning Swedish. The reasons vary from the possibility of an elective period of study in Sweden, or some romantic attachment!

We aim to teach the fundamentals of the language and one or two of our students are now settled in Sweden.

The course is free, apart from a small charge to cover the costs of photocopying, and the University of Otago makes available a lecture room for the Monday evening class.



Historic building: The Gustavianum in Uppsala, Sweden, which boasts the oldest university in Scandinavia. It contains one of the original, perhaps the oldest, lecture theatres built in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and is just over the road from the fine cathedral of Uppsala.

My own interest in Swedish arose from about three years living and working in Sweden, and subsequently by attending advanced classes at residential courses in Sweden, which also included Swedish literature programmes.

As far as we know the Dunedin course is the only regular course in Swedish, with a loose university affiliation, in New Zealand.

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# DILWORTH POETRY COMPETITION

Getting students to take ownership of their writing

By Julia Brown

Teacher in charge of French, Dilworth School (Auckland)

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Following a successful event in 2008, I once again ran the Dilworth Poetry competition, this time in term three, to coincide with International Languages Week. This seems to be a good way of getting students to express their thoughts and feelings, without having to stick to bullet points. Last year I gave students a selection of themes, but this year I left it open, giving them the chance to compose either a haiku or a poem. Here are the winning entries.

## Haiku

Ezra Whittaker-Powley  
Year 12, Dilworth School

## La Vampire

La petite vampire  
frappe les loups-garous méchants  
mange leurs visages moches.

## La Mouche

Où est cette mouche folle?  
Est-ce qu'elle est devant la poubelle?  
Ou sur le cahier?

## Le manchot

Il regarde toujours  
Attention à son regard fixe!  
Le manchot de mort.

## Le concombre

Le concombre vert  
Endormi parmi le feuillage calme  
Pousse tranquillement seul.

## Haiku

J'adore les haiku  
Mais ils ne se tiennent pas debout  
homme-ours-cochon sale.

## Poèmes

Tous les poèmes  
sont pour une compétition  
Ezra a gagné.

## Quand j'étais

Joe Mills  
Year 13, Dilworth School

Quand j'étais plus jeune  
J'ai rêvé des choses d'un enfant  
grimper dans les arbres  
jouer avec des jouets  
faire les modèles  
tomber  
J'ai rêvé  
J'ai rêvé des choses heureuses  
et jeune  
ensemble  
avec vous

Quand j'étais plus jeune  
J'avais de l'innocence, j'étais pur.  
Je pouvais faire sourire les autres  
être stupide  
avoir des accidents  
pleurer  
Je pouvais  
Je pouvais vous avoir  
pour m'aimer  
et être là  
pour moi

Quand j'étais plus jeune  
J'étais heureux, j'étais invincible  
J'étais fort  
Nous étions forts

## Tout change

Les fissures ont apparu  
Nous sommes faibles  
Les fissures ont apparu  
Nous sommes brisés

Quand j'étais plus jeune  
Nous étions ensemble

Je suis un homme  
Et je suis  
Seul.

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# SQUARE WATERMELONS

## The Japanese innovative mind

By Junko Tomooka

National adviser, Japanese (ILANZ)

What do these three things have in common?

### Square watermelons

In 2001, I was working in Brazil as a language adviser. One day I was watching the news on TV in my office with my colleagues. It was showing square watermelons produced in Japan and my colleagues were laughing at the news. One of them asked me, "Why do Japanese people try to make watermelons square? As long as they taste good the shape doesn't matter, does it? They are investing a lot of money for this. They are crazy!" We might look crazy but the passion towards innovation is in our blood. If watermelons were square, we would be able to stack them easily. That would result in reduced transport costs.

### Doraemon

Doraemon is a cartoon character famous in Japan and other Asian countries. He is a cat-like robot with lots of tools in his magical front pocket. Those tools have fascinated Japanese kids for many years. As you can see, a small propeller sits on his head. This tool is called take-koputaa, a combination of a Japanese traditional toy take-tonbo (bamboo-dragonfly) and herikoputaa (helicopter). Using this tool, everyone can fly. These tools are all imaginative and something kids can dream about. The Japanese obsession about innovative gadgets might be nurtured in Doraemon's pocket.

### Karaoke

Karaoke is a famous Japanese invention. The inventor was awarded the Ig Nobel Peace Prize in 2004. Since the prize started in 1991, 11 Japanese scientists have received this "honourable" prize. (The Ig Nobel Prize is a parody of the Nobel Prize and is given to 10 achievements that "first make people laugh and then make them think", each year. See <http://improbable.com/ig/> .) In 2004 the prize was presented to Daisuke Inoue of Hyogo Prefecture, Japan, for inventing karaoke, thereby providing an entirely new way for people to learn to tolerate each other.



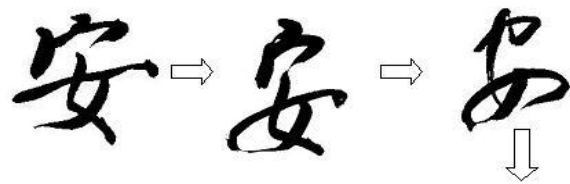
Inventive: Doraemon, karaoke and square watermelons are products of the Japanese innovative mind.

These three things are the products of the Japanese innovative mind.

But the biggest innovation in Japanese history was, I think, hiragana and katakana - Japanese phonetic symbols.

Ancient Japanese language didn't have any letters or symbols for writing like most other languages. But neighboring China had developed ideograms, Chinese characters. The Japanese adopted Chinese characters as a writing tool. If Chinese characters had been phonograms such as the alphabet, the Japanese wouldn't have had such difficulties as creating new a phonogram such as hiragana and katakana out of the ideogram.

Chinese characters



Japanese hiragana "A"

あ

The Japanese innovative mind was destined to develop from the ancient times of our history.

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## Motivation, beliefs, expectations

### *An evaluation of three Spanish language courses*

**Carlos Gonzalez-Tunon**

The Correspondence School of New Zealand

A well-designed educational programme is of the utmost importance for effective learning. Consequently, evaluating programmes in terms of learners' beliefs and expectations is important if the programmes are to contribute to learning. This is particularly crucial in distance programmes where most learners work independently. Kiely and Rea-Dickins (2005, p5) consider that language programme evaluation "is part of the novice teacher's checklist", "a process of determining [...] student satisfaction". This paper argues that programme evaluation should not only be the concern of novice teachers, but of all teachers since student satisfaction is crucial in encouraging student motivation which plays a central role in effective learning. This article will explore this issue by analysing participant responses to a programme evaluation questionnaire focusing on student motivation, the design of the learning booklets and overall impressions of three distance Spanish language programmes.

#### Introduction

The Correspondence School is the leading institution in distance education in New Zealand and is highly regarded for the quality of its courses. The development of courses undergoes rigorous pedagogical and design scrutiny. However, courses are not always formally evaluated by learners. Given that courses are developed for learners, it is important they be evaluated in some way. For this reason, the author, a Spanish teacher and the teacher in charge of the Spanish Section at The Correspondence School, embarked on the evaluation of the three senior Spanish language programmes offered by the school in the hope that the evaluation would provide information on students' beliefs about the effectiveness of the courses, particularly the extent to which they met students' needs and expectations. Each of these elements is crucial in the impact it can have on student motivation and engagement in learning.

The evaluation was conducted in two parts; this paper presents the results of the first part which aimed at gathering data on student motivation, the students' overall impressions of the courses and their reactions to the design of the learning booklets. It was hoped the results would indicate how well the courses met the students' needs and expectations, and also identify aspects of the design of the booklets that could be improved. The second part of the study seeks to evaluate the teaching on the course and to determine to what extent the students consider that the course helps them with their learning. This should provide an indication of how pedagogically sound the course is. The results of this second part of the evaluation will be presented in another paper (forthcoming).

The paper is divided into four parts. The first part provides background information on the courses and then describes the methodology adopted. The third part presents the results and discussion, and the final section provides conclusions and recommendations.

## The Spanish Language Programme

The Spanish Section of The Correspondence School offers three senior Spanish courses coded SP100, SP220, and SP300. The SP100 is an accelerated course since no junior courses are offered. Therefore in addition to the content appropriate to the level of the course it covers content from more junior levels. It is intended that the SP100 programme provides students with access to all the topics required at the level of the SP100 course, and prepares them to sit national examinations. SP220 is an intermediate course, while the SP300 is advanced. These two programmes are a follow-up to the SP100 and the SP220 course respectively.

The programmes follow a storyline. This makes it possible for students to learn the topics in context, which should make learning easier. In addition, it allows the inclusion of simulated authentic situations which offer the opportunity for learners to communicate in the target language.

The SP100 and SP220 courses include twelve booklets each while the SP300 includes only eight booklets. In addition to the booklets, which contain the explanations, a workbook and a tape (at the time of writing this paper all tapes had been replaced by CDs) are also provided. The SP100 programme is divided into eight lessons. Both the SP220 and SP300 are divided into 10 lessons. For all three courses, each lesson includes between three or four language-learning activities which learners are expected to complete in approximately one hour and in the case of the SP300 up to one-and-a-half hours. The booklets are designed mostly in black and white with, in almost every case, one black-and-white illustration for each lesson. The courses have very few colour illustrations.

Most of the language-learning activities are self-marked with answers provided at the back of each booklet. This provides students with instant feedback. The assessment of each booklet is based on learning activities (between two or four) for which answers are not provided. Teachers base their feedback mainly on students' performance in these activities. The feedback is given either via letter, email or recorded messages, depending on what is most suitable in the circumstances.

## Methodology

### Subjects

A total of 90 students completed the questionnaire. The subjects were classified into three main groups – those who followed the course at primary school, those enrolled at secondary school and thirdly, adult students. The majority of students who completed the questionnaire were secondary school students (75%), followed by the adult group (24%), with only one primary student (1%) completing the questionnaire (see Table 1). Two subjects did not identify which group they belonged to.

	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Primary school students	1	1%
Secondary school students	66	75%
Adult students	21	24%
Category unidentified	2	
	90	100%

Table 1. Breakdown of questionnaire respondents

## Instrument

A questionnaire was chosen as the means of collecting data. There were two reasons for this. Firstly, it was considered to be the most efficient way of collecting data given the fact the learners were located all over New Zealand and in some cases overseas. Secondly, the questions in the questionnaire were expected to elicit valid responses, since the type of data sought could be obtained from the questions asked.

The questionnaire was divided into four parts (see Appendix A). The first part included seven questions aimed at eliciting background information about the students. The second part aimed at exploring students' motivation. The third part included items focused on the design of the booklets. This section included questions about the attractiveness of the booklets, the number of language-learning activities in each lesson, the time taken to complete the lessons, the balance of activities in the course and the length of the listening and reading texts. The final part of the questionnaire aimed to document students' overall impressions of the course.

A pilot study was conducted to identify whether there were questions that were not clear. The four pilot-study subjects were two students studying the SP100 programme, one Spanish teacher and a proficient learner of Spanish. Responses to the draft questionnaire used in the pilot study were analysed and, as a result, three items were modified to remove ambiguity.

## Data Collection

The questionnaire was sent to the students after they completed the fourth booklet for each of the evaluated courses (SP100, SP220, and SP300). It was sent at this stage because it was considered that after completing four course booklets, the students would have had enough exposure to the courses to have a clear idea of how well they liked the programme and the materials.

The questionnaire was sent to the first 175 students who completed the fourth booklet for the three courses. It was decided no questionnaires would be sent out after the end of the third school term (end of September) because of the limited likelihood of students returning the completed questionnaires once examinations and the end of the school year approached. Ninety students returned the completed questionnaire (see Table 2). As Table 2 indicates, 46 of the respondents were enrolled in the SP100 course, 25 were enrolled in SP220, and 19 were doing SP300. The relative return rates mirror the total number of students enrolled in each

course, with SP100 being the course with the largest number of students enrolled, followed by SP220, and SP300 having the fewest students enrolled.

	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
SP100	46	51%
SP220	25	28%
SP300	19	21%
Total	90	100%

Table 2. Total number of questionnaires returned from students studying the three courses

The total number of responses - 90 out of 175 (51%) - was relatively low. The questionnaire was sent to 75 students doing the SP100 course, while 46 and 30 were sent to students who were studying the SP220 and SP300 courses respectively. Therefore, the percentage of responses for each course was 61%, 54%, and 63% respectively. Given the fact there was a relatively equal proportion of responses for each course, the results would be representative of views on each course.

## Data Analysis

The responses for the closed items in each completed questionnaire were counted and then percentages were calculated. In the case of open-ended questions, the responses were listed, then coded based on emerging patterns before counting the total number of responses in each category. Finally, percentages were calculated for each category.

## Results and Discussion

The results for each question in the questionnaire are discussed in this section. They indicate 46% of the subjects considered that the course was very good, while 31% thought it was excellent. The combined percentage for these two results (77%) indicates that the majority of the students rated the courses very highly. Seventeen percent of the subjects gave a rating of 3 (good), while 4% rated the course poor. None of the subjects gave a rating of 1 to any of the courses. Overall this result suggests students formed a very positive impression of the courses, and approved of the design of the booklets. (Table 3 Overall rating of the courses by respondents has been omitted due to size.)

The subjects were also asked why they were studying Spanish. Three main reasons emerged from the responses: to use the language with someone they knew, enjoyment of the sound of the language and an intention to use the language for travel (see Table 4). Therefore overall, their main reason for studying Spanish is to communicate. This result is interesting since, despite the fact that distance learning provides little opportunity for students to communicate with other Spanish speakers compared with face-to-face learning settings, students may have thought that the courses provided a reasonable number of opportunities to practise speaking. This seems to correlate with the data below regarding students' preferred mode of study,

which is predominantly in a classroom (see Table 5), as well as students' main goal for studying Spanish - which was to develop fluency, particularly spoken fluency (see Table 6).

	<b>Reason for studying Spanish</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1	Use it with someone s/he knows	22	17%
2	Like the sound of the language	22	17%
3	Travel	18	14%
4	Further knowledge	11	9%
5	Like Hispanic cultures	10	8%
6	Want to learn another language	9	7%
7	Is widely spoken	7	5%
8	Work opportunities	6	5%
9	Like learning other languages	5	4%
10	Teach it	5	4%
11	Have to take another subject	5	4%
12	Is easy to learn	3	2%
13	Gain qualifications	2	2%
14	Be challenged intellectually	2	2%
15	Prove knowledge of the language	1	1%
	Total	128	100%

Table 4. Reasons for studying Spanish

	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Classroom	47	53%
Distance	32	36%
Either mode	10	11%
No response	1	
	90	100%

Table 5. Preferred mode of study

In response to a question about their goals in learning Spanish, as Table 6 indicates, 57% of the learners identified their main goal as the development of fluency in the four macro-skills of listening, reading, writing and speaking. Speaking is the skill students most wish to develop. This result and the results regarding the reason students decided to study Spanish (see Table 4) suggest the Spanish courses need to provide learning experiences in which students communicate in a spontaneous and natural way. This could be achieved by using more communication technologies.

	<b>Goal</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1	To develop fluency in the main four language skills	53	57%
	Speaking 45 (55%)		
	Listening 25 (30%)		
	Reading 7 (9%)		
	Writing 5 (6%)		
	Total 82 (100%)		
2	To gain NCEA qualifications (national qualifications)	15	16%
3	To have a better understanding of how the language works	8	9%
4	To learn about Hispanic cultures	5	5%
5	To gain a good command of grammar/vocabulary	4	4%
6	To learn basic knowledge	2	2%
7	To further knowledge	2	2%
8	To gain background knowledge for future tertiary study	2	2%
9	To continue enjoying learning the language	1	1%
10	To complete the course	1	1%
	Total	93	99%

Table 6. Goals wanted to be achieved at the end of the course

When asked about their study habits, 84% of the respondents indicated they studied regularly (see Table 7). This suggests that students were engaged and motivated, which correlates with data from Table 9 regarding students' level of motivation. Overall the results indicate that students liked the courses, suggesting that their needs and expectations were met.

Analysis of responses exploring the reasons why some students did not work regularly on their course materials indicated that the principal reason was that students had busy schedules (see Table 8). Therefore, the courses themselves did not appear to be the cause of this difficulty.

	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Study regularly	76	84%
Did not study regularly	14	16%
Total	90	100%

Table 7. Percentage of students who did and did not study regularly

	<b>Reasons for not studying regularly</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1	Busy schedule	7	64%
2	Lack of motivation	1	9%
3	Course not interesting	1	9%
4	No opportunity to practise the language other than the course	1	9%
5	Too many distractions	1	9%
	Total	11	100%

Table 8. Reasons for not studying regularly

Analysis of responses to the items investigating motivation indicated that 58% of students described themselves as either very highly or highly motivated (see Table 9). In other words, more than half of the respondents were very motivated. The combined percentage of students who said they had low or very low motivation was 12%. Therefore, a very low number of students were not motivated to do the course. Students who had low motivation were invited to provide reasons for this. The results in Table 10 indicate that the main reason these students were not motivated was because they were busy with other aspects of their life. Therefore, overall the programmes were not the main cause of their low motivation, suggesting they were satisfied with the programmes.

Very low	Low	Average	High	Very high	
1	2	3	4	5	Total
5	6	27	37	17	92
5%	7%	29%	40%	18%	100%

Table 9. Motivation level in the course

	Reasons for having low motivation	Number	Percentage
1	Being busy	10	23%
2	Lacking someone to push me to do the work	6	14%
3	Working on my own	3	7%
4	Booklets are not interesting	3	7%
5	Dislike working by correspondence	3	7%
6	Lack of instant help from teacher or someone else	3	7%
7	Lack of opportunities to practise with other people	3	7%
8	Distractions around study environment	3	7%
9	Finding work difficult	2	5%
10	Being lazy	2	5%
11	Delay in getting assignments back	1	2%
12	Lack of resources (ie tape recorder)	1	2%
13	Inappropriate learning environment	1	2%
14	No time allocated at the main school where most dual students were studying	1	2%
15	Conversations on tapes/instructions are difficult to follow	1	2%
	Total	43	99%

Table 10. Reasons for low motivation

Analysis of the responses indicated that three main aspects of the course contributed most to students' enjoyment (see Table 11). The first aspect is the convenience of working in their own time and place (15%); secondly, the students liked the way lessons were structured (14%), and thirdly, they appreciated the inclusion of a cultural component in the courses (9%). These results suggest that despite most learners preferring classroom study (see Table 5), they found studying Spanish by distance a satisfactory and gratifying learning experience. In this way, the courses appear to have met the students' needs and expectations.

	<b>Aspects most liked about the courses</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1	Convenience of working in my own time and place	20	15%
2	Lessons being well structured	19	14%
3	Inclusion of cultural component	12	9%
4	Teacher (good and his/her feedback)	7	5%
5	Variety	6	4%
6	Regular practice (language skills)	6	4%
7	Fun	5	4%
8	Story format	5	4%
9	Inclusion of grammar	5	4%
10	Being able to work independently	5	4%
11	Resources	4	3%
12	Having audio tapes to go with the lessons	4	3%
13	Topics which resemble real life	3	2%
14	Variety of Spanish speakers	3	2%
15	Listening to spoken texts	3	2%
16	Speaking practice	3	2%
17	Music/ songs	3	2%
18	Completing conversations	3	2%
19	Right level of difficulty	3	2%
20	Grammar is easy to understand	3	2%
21	Magazines	2	1%
22	Listening to new vocabulary	1	0.7%
23	Prompt marking	1	0.7%
24	Being able to take the material away	1	0.7%
25	Challenge	1	0.7%
26	Link to other resources	1	0.7%
27	'Chunk' approach of presenting language	1	0.7%
28	Booklets being in colour (the cover of the SP100 was in colour)	1	0.7%
29	Content useful for future travel	1	0.7%
30	Crosswords	1	0.7%
31	Writing diary entries	1	0.7%
32	Way in which numbers are learned	1	0.7%
33	Helping me get into a work habit	1	0.7%
	Total	136	98%

Table 11. Aspects most highly appreciated in the courses

The results of analysis of the aspects of the courses students liked least revealed 49 different types of responses. Thirty-two of the 49 responses were supplied only once by individual students while eight were provided by two students. Given the high number of individual responses, the responses were collapsed into broader categories, reflecting the principal themes. The results are shown in Table 12 and indicate that the aspect most disliked by the students was the lack of interaction with teachers and classmates. It seems the students would have preferred to meet their teachers and fellow students face to face, and did not like the somewhat unnatural task of having to speak into a tape recorder. This result agrees with that of students preferring to study in a classroom (see Table 5). It would be desirable to obtain information in the early stages of the courses about those students who prefer interaction with their teachers and classmates so that events could be organised in the area where those

students live, in order to provide at least one opportunity each year for them to meet with their teachers. Alternatively, these students could be contacted more regularly by phone or perhaps even visited, so that their relationship with their teacher could develop.

	<b>Aspects most disliked about the courses</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1	Lack of interaction with teacher and classmates	21	22
2	Instructional Design	14	15
3	Language practice	12	13
4	Material/ content	11	12
5	Personal issues	9	9
6	Mode of delivery	7	7
7	Sending and receiving work	5	5
8	Intensity/ pace of the course	4	4
9	Assessment	4	4
10	Vocabulary/grammar	4	4
11	Explanations and instructions	3	3
12	Teacher	1	1
	Total	95	99%

Table 12. Aspects most disliked about the programmes

Eighty-four students responded to the question, “Do you think you have good rapport (a good relationship) with your teacher?”. Eighty percent of these students considered that they had (see Table 13) while 20% felt that they did not. Six students did not answer the question.

	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Have good rapport	67	80%
Did not have good rapport	17	20%
No response	6	
Total	90	100%

Table 13. Percentage of students who believe they do and do not have good rapport with teachers

The analysis of the data gathered on how teachers create rapport with their students suggests this took place mainly in two ways. Firstly, teachers create rapport by providing positive feedback and suggestions for improvement via letters (see Table 14). Clearly a positive tone in all communications with students is important in a distance-education environment, in order to create good rapport. But 17 out of 84 students considered they did not have good rapport with their teachers. According to these students, there were two main reasons for this: not having much contact with their teachers and not having talked to their teachers (see Table 15). These results are interesting since, although teachers regularly communicate with students via letters, email or recorded messages, the students may not value these forms of communication as highly as face-to-face or telephone contact. This seems to correlate with the third most disliked aspect of the courses, which was not being able to have face-to-face contact with their teacher (see Table 12). Some suggestions on how to cater for these students are provided in the recommendations section.

	<b>How teachers create good rapport with their students</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1	Positive feedback and suggestions for improvement	12	21%
2	Teachers' letters	12	21%
3	Teacher friendliness	8	14%
4	Teachers' helpful notes	6	10%
5	Teacher encouragement	5	9%
6	Contact with teacher by phone/writing with any concerns and teacher responsiveness	3	5%
7	Regular contact with teacher	3	5%
8	Teacher-recorded messages	3	5%
9	Teacher being very supportive	2	3%
10	Teacher having good communication skills	1	2%
11	Teacher being pleased with work	1	2%
12	Writing to each other	1	2%
13	The way teacher marks work	1	2%
	Total	58	101%

Table 14. How teachers create good rapport with students

	<b>Reasons why learners do not have good rapport with their teachers</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1	Have not had much contact with teacher	7	37%
2	Have never spoken with teacher	6	32%
3	Not knowing who my teacher is	3	16%
4	Not knowing the teacher well	1	5%
5	Do not need to have rapport with teacher	1	5%
6	Like being independent	1	5%
	Total	19	100%

Table 15. Reasons why learners do not have good rapport with their teachers

When surveyed about the presentation of the learning materials, 92% of students indicated that the booklets were attractively presented (see Table 16) while 6% did not feel this. Those students who considered the booklets were not attractive believed this was due to the lack of colour (see Table 17). Having colour booklets could help the students view the booklets more positively, which might encourage motivation and therefore greater engagement.

	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	80	92%
No	5	6%
Partly	2	2%
No response	3	
Total	90	100%

Table 16. Percentage of students who considered the booklets were or were not attractive

	<b>Reason why booklets are not attractive</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1	Lack of colour	7	78%
2	Not visually appealing	1	11%
3	Repetitive	1	11%
	Total	9	100%

Table 17. Reasons why students considered the booklets were not attractive

The majority of the respondents (78%) considered the number of language-learning activities in the booklets was appropriate (see Table 18). Most lessons include four activities.

	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
too many	17	20%
adequate	68	78%
not enough	2	2%
no response	3	
Total	90	100%

Table 18. Adequacy of the number of language-learning activities.

When asked about the length of time they spent on each lesson, 37% of all students indicated that they spent about an hour completing a lesson, 37% spent more than an hour, while 27% spent less than an hour (see Table 19). The combined percentage of students who reported completing each lesson in an hour or less was 64%. This suggests the materials designers' estimates of the time needed to complete each lesson matches the students' performance. Differences taken in the time needed to complete a lesson are likely to be due to differences between individual students' proficiency in the language. Therefore, less proficient learners may require more time to complete the lessons.

	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
More than an hour	33	37%
An hour	33	37%
Less than an hour	24	27%
Total	90	101%

Table 19. Time spent completing a lesson.

Eighty-eight percent of the respondents considered that the courses had a balanced number of listening, reading, writing, and speaking activities (see Table 20). This result is pleasing since one of the aims of the programmes is to develop proficiency equally in each of the four macro-skills.

	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	77	88%
No	11	13%
No response	2	
Total	90	100%

Table 20. Percentage of students who considered that their courses had a balance of listening, reading, writing and speaking activities.

When asked about the length of the spoken and written texts, 84% of the respondents reported that the length was appropriate (see Table 21). In fact, the length of texts varies from course to course depending on the course level. The number of words contained in the written and spoken texts designed for the lower level course (SP100) is overall fewer than in those designed for the intermediate and advanced courses, with the higher number of words for texts included in the advanced course.

	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Too long	11	12%
Adequate	76	84%
Too short	3	3%
Total	90	100%

Table 21. Student responses regarding the length of listening and reading texts.

Table 22 shows that 35% of students believed the design of the booklets could be improved by including more colour. In addition, 16% considered that the presentation could also be improved by adding more pictures and photos. Therefore, introducing colour booklets appears to be crucial in improving the design of the booklets and potentially in enhancing student motivation and engagement.

Students were invited to provide their overall impressions of the courses. Thirty-nine percent of students indicated that the courses were “good” or “very good” and 14% suggested they were very enjoyable (see Table 23). Overall, all other responses were positive, which suggests that learners liked the courses. Therefore, it can be said that overall the courses met students’ needs and expectations.

	<b>Ways of improving the design of the booklets</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1	Having more colour	17	35%
2	Having more pictures/photos	8	16%
3	More space for answering questions	3	6%
4	Not having errors	3	6%
5	Having a variety of images on the cover	2	4%
6	Having a different colour for each booklet	1	2%
7	Having more borders	1	2%
8	Having word searches	1	2%
9	Having better illustrations	1	2%
10	Having fun activities to break up the more complex ones	1	2%
11	Including more explanations and examples	1	2%
12	Variation in length of listening and reading texts	1	2%
13	A balanced number of exercises for each study period	1	2%
14	Instructions in Spanish	1	2%
15	Having fewer listening activities	1	2%
16	More free speaking activities based on a topic studied during a period	1	2%
17	Having more crosswords	1	2%
18	Revision booklet in each term	1	2%
19	Having revision activities	1	2%
20	Grammar points to be listed in the content page	1	2%
21	Having a hard cover for the grammar supplement	1	2%
	Total	49	99%

Table 22. Ways in which the design of the booklets could be improved

	<b>Overall impression of the courses</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1	Good/very good	33	39%
2	Enjoyable	12	14%
3	Well thought out	5	6%
4	Difficult	5	6%
5	Well set out	3	4%
6	Easy to follow	3	4%
7	Very well organised	3	4%
8	Fun	3	4%
9	Practical	3	4%
10	Good in the way of support by the teacher	3	4%
11	Very useful	2	2%
12	Excellent	2	2%
13	Moves quickly, sometimes does not provide enough time for revision	2	2%
14	Well made	1	1%
15	Very good pace	1	1%
16	Very interactive and educational	1	1%
17	Excessively detailed	1	1%
18	Time-consuming	1	1%
	Total	84	100%

Table 23. Overall impression of the courses

The final question in the questionnaire invited students to provide other comments about the courses. The three main comments made by more than one student were “happy with the course”, “recommend the use of CDs” (tapes have already been replaced by CDs at the time of writing this report), and “there is a lot of work to do and words to memorise” (see Table 24). The last comment was made by students who were doing the SP100 course, which is an accelerated programme. The results suggest that there is a need to develop junior programmes and to modify the SP100 programme to make it more manageable. The rest of the comments were made each by one individual student. It is likely that these comments reflect personal preferences and impressions rather than applying to the majority of students. However, overall, students considered that the design of the booklets was good and they were satisfied with the courses.

The results of analysis of comments students made about the courses showed a total of 30 different responses. Twenty-four of the 30 responses occurred only once, while three responses were supplied by two students. Considering that the majority of the responses were made by individual students, a further analysis was conducted to identify overall trends. Table 24 shows the results of this analysis and indicates that most comments related to pedagogy and course content (53% of the total comments).

Some of the comments made concerning pedagogy included the view that the amount of work and the number of words required to be memorised were considerable and that some of the speaking tasks were somewhat prescribed. The students also recommended including exercises in the grammar supplement, and suggested that two sets of similar assessment activities for each booklet should be provided. They also suggested that the vocabulary used

in each booklet should be recycled more. Adopting some of these suggestions may well lead to enhanced learning for course participants.

Six students made comments about the course content. Students commented that the booklets provided substantial guidance throughout. However, there were also comments suggesting that some conversations on the tapes were hard to follow and that one set of instructions was not clear. Another suggestion was that it would be helpful to include a summary of the main points learned and an exercise on them at the end of each booklet, in addition to a separate listing of all the vocabulary introduced in the booklet. If this suggestion were adopted, there could be a number of benefits: the summary would emphasise the main topics learned in the booklets and the exercise would give learners feedback on how well they had understood the content. Vocabulary lists are currently presented separately for each language learning activity. However, listing them separately in a cumulative list at the end of each booklet could help learners revise the vocabulary since they would not have to turn to the different pages in the booklets to find the various lists.

Overall, the majority of the comments made were overwhelmingly positive which suggests that the content and the pedagogy in the courses are sound.

	<b>Comments made about the course</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1	Pedagogy	7	23%
2	Course content	6	20%
3	Positive impression of the course	5	17%
4	Communication with teachers and fellow students	4	13%
5	Course administration	3	10%
6	Having CDs instead of tapes	2	7%
7	Learning	2	7%
8	Feedback	1	3%
	Total	30	100%

Table 24. Comments made about the courses

## Recommendations

Based on analysis of the data three major recommendations can be made to improve the overall effectiveness of the Spanish courses. Firstly, opportunities should be provided for learners to communicate orally with other Spanish speakers or peers. This could be done by implementing communication technologies such as videoconferencing, Skype, or Messenger. This would significantly enhance the interactive component of the course.

Secondly, those students who favour face-to-face contact with their teachers should be identified, and events organised in which those students can meet their teachers. In addition, the possibility of establishing regular telephone contact with these students should be explored.

Finally, the booklets should be re-designed so as to incorporate more illustrations and photos. This would address negative student feedback on the current design of the printed course material.

## Conclusions

The evaluation of the three Spanish courses described here suggests that, overall, the courses are well designed and the students well satisfied. Students were positive about the course materials and teaching and appeared to have their needs and expectations met. However, the recommendations made in the previous section are suggestions which could result in The Correspondence School better catering for the needs of some learners. These changes could lead to an increase in motivation for some students which in turn could lead to enhanced engagement and learning.

**Appendix A**  
**Questionnaire sent to students**

**Part 1**

**EVALUATION OF THE SPANISH COURSE**

The following questionnaire sets out to evaluate the Spanish course you are doing. Please answer the following questions as honestly as you can. Your answers will be very helpful as we improve the quality of the course and our teaching. Please tick the box for the answer that you consider most appropriate. Please write comments on the lines provided to explain aspects you did not like.

**Part 1 Background information**

1. Which course are you doing?

SP100

SP220

SP300

2. Overall how do you rate the course?

(1 = very poor 5 = excellent)

1

2

3

4

5

3. What enrolment group do you belong to?

Primary

Secondary

Adult

4. Why did you decide to study Spanish?

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5. What are the goal(s) you want to achieve by the end of the course?

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6. Do you study Spanish regularly?

Yes

No

If your answer is 'no', please explain

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7. I prefer to study

by distance.

in a classroom.

**Part 2 Motivation**

8. How do you rate your motivation level in the course? (1 = very low 5 = very high)

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

9. If your level of motivation is low, what do you think is causing this?

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10. What are the three things you most like about the course?

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11. What are the three things you dislike the most about the course?

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12. Do you think you have a good rapport (good relationship) with your teacher?    Yes            No

Please explain,

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**Part 3 Design of the Booklets**

13. Do you find the way the booklets are presented attractive?      Yes              No

If your answer is 'no', please explain.

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14. Overall the number of lessons and exercises in each study period (paso/ step) is  
too many.  
adequate.  
not enough.

15. Overall, how long did it take you to complete a study period ('paso'/step)?  
more than an hour.  
an hour.  
less than an hour.

16. Does the course include a balanced number of listening, reading, writing and speaking exercises?  
Yes                      No  
If your answer is 'no', please indicate which type of exercises you consider there are too many (ie listening, etc) of

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17. The length of the listening and reading texts are  
too long.  
appropriate.  
not long enough.

18. Please indicate anything that could help improve the design/ presentation of the booklets.

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**Part 4 Overall Impression of the Course**

19. What is your overall impression of the course?

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20. Is there any other comment you would like to add?

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Thank you very much for your co-operation.

Please **return** your answers with your **next booklet or in an envelope**.

## References

Kiely, R. and P. Rhe-Dikins (2005). *Program Evaluation in Language Education*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.