

Sound Bites for Better Teaching

Making Connections: Is this a Spanish class or is it a geography class taught in Spanish?

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The Connections Strand of the National Foreign Languages Framework is often falsely equated with Interdisciplinary Education. Its intent is not to turn foreign language teachers into math, science, history, geography, etc. teachers but rather to make them aware of the disciplines that are present in the language texts that they use. Is a trip to the museum to see the French Impressionists paintings a French class or is it an Art History class? When studying a map of Spain, is it just a way to learn in Spanish words such as mountain, river, province, city, ocean, etc. or is the goal to learn the geography of the country and its effects on the people? Isn't converting miles into kilometers, pounds into kilograms, or inches into meters a math lesson rather than practice in saying numbers in German? When one focuses on the discipline, the vocabulary will be learned in context rather than in isolation and studies show that that is the most effective way to learn vocabulary.

Self Evaluation (no right or wrong answers)

- *Once you have taught numbers, what do the students do with them besides count, indicate the date, or state the year that they were born?*
- *Do you generally teach vocabulary in context or in word lists?*
- *When teaching the geography or the history of the foreign country, do you favor teaching it in English or in the foreign language?*
- *When reading a history text, do you consider it more as an activity to increase vocabulary and see examples of proper grammar usage than as an opportunity to learn some world history? Which do you test for the most?*
- *Do you compare the United States to the foreign country in terms of governmental structure, population, size, culture, history, currency, etc? If so, which language do you favor? What do you really want the students to learn?*

TIP

To help students visualize the differences between the metric system and the American system of measuring sizes and distances, have the students measure the classroom floor, walls, furniture, white board, etc. in both and require the students to measure their height, the size of their shoes and their clothes in both.

French teachers:

Marcel has prepared a wonderful set of resources for *Le Petit Prince*, all of which tie to the Connections Standard including

a book review http://nclrc.org/cultureclub/collection/library/french.html#petit_prince

an article http://nclrc.org/cultureclub/collection/teachers_lounge/french.html#pp_1

a lesson plan http://nclrc.org/cultureclub/collection/teachers_lounge/french.html#pp_1