

Assessment, Emotional Scaffolding, and Technology: Powerful Allies in the K-12 World Language Classroom

Nancy J. Gadbois

High School of Science and Technology, Springfield, MA

Connie Fredericks-Malone

CDF Music Legacy, Canandaigua, NY

Teachers rely on textbooks and authentic documents to render a country's people and culture accessible to their students. These documents often include press releases, commercial films, news broadcasts, and audio recordings. Authentic documents are exterior to a textbook's assessment guide and, therefore, the proper assessment of tasks involving documents of this nature can prove challenging to time-constrained teachers.

Effective teachers know which topics interest learners, and they integrate those topics into their curriculum on a regular basis. They also edit and personalize tasks to make learning more meaningful and practical. This strategic appeal to a wide range of students' interests and talents seeks to link effective teaching and learning to the dynamics of what has come to be called *emotional intelligence*.

In *Emotional Intelligence*, Daniel Goleman (1994) cites research that strongly suggests a link between higher academic performance and instructional designs that engage students intellectually and emotionally. According to Goleman, "the abilities called emotional intelligence, which include self-control, zeal and persistence, and the ability to motivate oneself . . . are skills that can be taught to children" (p. xii). A more recent article, "Emotional Scaffolding: An Exploration Of The Teacher Knowledge At The Intersection Of Student Emotion And The Subject Matter" by Jerry Rosiek from the University of Alabama (2003), builds on Goleman's premise of teaching emotional intelligence to children. The article states, "One practice that became a focus of inquiry in [Rosiek's] groups was the tailoring of pedagogical representations to influence students' emotional response to some specific aspect of the subject matter being taught. This practice was named *emotional scaffolding*" (p. 399). Inherent in the emotional scaffolding teaching practices are the elements that produce in the student an emotional connection to the subject, thereby motivating the student and enhancing the learning process. Rosiek (2003) believes "when education has happened well, we do not simply emerge knowing the world; we also come to love, resent, endure, care, and be thrilled about

things in ways we did not before” (p. 399). Emotional scaffolding will facilitate a connection on a primal level between the student and the subject matter.

For the purposes of this article the authors will use the definition of emotional scaffolding in the context of education, specifically the K-12 world language classroom. Our premise is that emotional scaffolding occurs when a teacher designs a lesson plan, activity, or approach to a subject that incorporates the students’ personal lives, including ethnicity, socio-economic group, history, and culture.

World language teachers have available to them sophisticated technologies that can be used in combination with emotional scaffolding to enhance language learning. Computers, the Internet, DVDs, CDs, audio recordings, and videotapes are extending traditional classroom methodologies and pedagogies. Now that learning stimuli have been identified, acquiring the materials and designing the lessons that actively involve students in their own learning are the next steps. To illustrate how contemporary personalities or pop icons, reinforced by emotional scaffolding teaching practices and technology, are used to motivate students and enhance language learning, we explore the musical works of two artists, Carole Fredericks and José Feliciano.

The critical element, which comes first in the planning, is envisioning appropriate assessment. The next step from the teacher standpoint is how to design the lesson plan or curriculum unit to ensure improved student knowledge. Before engaging students in the task, the teacher must determine what targeted understanding is expected from the students. Can the students clearly prove that the acquired knowledge is concrete and meaningful? This approach is based on *Understanding by Design* (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998) and is featured in the assessment strategies video of the Annenberg/CPB project, “Teaching Foreign Languages” (Annenberg/CPB, 2004).

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One segment of that assessment strategies video stresses alternative assessment, under the title Integrated Performance Assessment (IPA), a tri-modal task, which emphasizes the critical feedback that students receive from their instructor after each phase of a three-tier task, including interpretive, interpersonal and presentational modes of communication. After a student completes one mode, the teacher discusses with the student what he or she did well or not so well in order to highlight areas in need of improvement and to encourage the student to perform better on the next mode. Effective feedback offers strategies including circumlocution, inference, and suggestions that reinforce prior student knowledge.

To develop her IPA, Nancy Gadbois, one of the authors of this article, selected a music video by Carole Fredericks due to a belief in the educational value of emotional intelligence. The development of learning activities based on this music video clearly demonstrates the practical use of emotional scaffolding techniques.

Carole Denise Fredericks was born in Springfield, MA, several kilometers from the High School of Science and Technology, where Nancy Gadbois teaches. An African-American from a talented musical family in Springfield, Carole was the sister of the famed bluesman Taj Mahal. She immigrated to France in the 1970's and rose to musical fame in both Europe and Africa. Ms. Fredericks' untimely death in 2001 came after performing a benefit concert in Dakar, Senegal. At the invitation of the French government, Ms. Fredericks was interred in historic Montmartre Cemetery in Paris. Montmartre's official brochure lists Ms. Fredericks' gravesite along with many French notables.

The realization that Ms. Fredericks was recognized as a major musical icon abroad, but not in her native U.S., not to mention her hometown, was of immediate interest to students. Furthermore, the class was intrigued that she had limited exposure to the French language in this country and yet was able to immerse herself in the target language at a later stage in her life, becoming fluent within a short time of her arrival in France. International students in the class

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were convinced that she was indeed a native speaker, and they were pleasantly surprised to learn of her local Springfield roots.

Technology played a key role in bringing this artist to life for students and thereby establishing a current persona with whom they could identify. Students experienced an emotional connection to a pop icon from their community, and they related to the text in the form of the song lyrics as well as to the subject matter within a structured lesson. The Internet allowed the teacher and students to research her charitable concerts along with the details of her international tours and explore her other accomplishments. The class had access to music videos by the artist that were available in the U.S., thanks to the generosity of Jean-Jacques Goldman and the Fredericks family, including Ms. Fredericks' sister, a co-author of this article. The music videos gave students the opportunity to see Ms. Fredericks perform live both as a solo artist and as a member of a famed trio with Jean- Jacques Goldman and Michael Jones.

Sample Lessons

The sample lessons shared here were created by teachers of world languages. Lesson #1 is from a French class of Nancy Gadbois at the High School of Science and Technology in Springfield, Massachusetts. Lesson #2 was designed by Margaret Sullivan for her Spanish classes at East Longmeadow High School in East Longmeadow, Massachusetts. Valencia Siff developed Lesson #3 for her students of French at the Collegiate School in Richmond, Virginia. These veteran world language teachers share lessons they designed as well as student comments, resources and websites.

Lesson #1

“A Nos Actes Manqués” (To the Deeds We Missed) was the video used to develop an alternative assessment for a French 4 class of an urban public high school. The lyrics in the song discuss actions not taken in everyday life or missed opportunities. The video takes place in Paris where Carole, Jean-Jacques, and Michael make their separate ways to a pre-determined location. En route they each observe positive and negative human interactions, accidents, ethnically

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diverse families, couples, political and social events, and children at play. Upon the arrival of all three at a party, the viewer realizes that they were en route to Carole's own birthday celebration. Friendship, sharing gifts, laughter, good music, and dancing greet the three singers at their journey's end.

The instructional tasks were threefold, covering the interpretive, interpersonal and presentational modes of communication. For the interpretive task, the class was told that the family of the late Carole Fredericks had asked for its help in understanding the message of this particular video. Initially, the students watched the video and then answered a worksheet based on the video's storyline. No written lyrics were given to the class. The students had to rely on the sound and the visuals, including body language, to interpret the theme of the song.

After correcting their sheets and receiving feedback from the teacher, the students moved on to the next phase of the assessment: the interpersonal task. A week after interpreting the music video, students interviewed each other about their preferences for or against certain types of music and activities. No rehearsals or written aids were provided to help students in this task. The teacher scored students individually and gave them feedback to improve their performance.

Two weeks later, the assessment of the presentational mode began. The high school class was asked to make a presentation introducing the artist to an elementary school French class scheduled to visit soon after they finished the lesson. These high school ambassadors, including several from Dakar, Senegal, were enthusiastic about sharing with younger students what they had learned about Carole Fredericks. Students selected the song "Kaai Djallema," from the compact disc *Couleurs et Parfums* (Colors and Perfumes), featuring Carole singing with Nicole Amovin from Senegal. The song offered the next layer in this exercise. "Kaai Djallema" is a bilingual rendition of Cyndi Lauper's song "Time After Time," sung in both English and Wolof. The desired outcome was to send home a bilingual French and Wolof publication to the parents of the elementary school students. That publication was to include information about Carole Fredericks as well as proverbs in Wolof. When the students from Dakar mentioned that they could only speak but not write Wolof, the students went online to search for Wolof information

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and dictionaries. The project progressed quickly, thanks to the Internet resources and the invaluable presence of these heritage speakers of French and Wolof.

Thanks to publisher software in the Windows XP Microsoft package, organizing and editing a publication for the elementary students to share with their parents was

relatively easy. The high school French students were assessed on both their verbal presentation to the fourth grade students and on the written handout prepared for the event.

Lesson #2

José Feliciano is our second pop icon. The lesson was developed using the music video *Oye Guitarra Mía: La Vida y Música de José Feliciano* (Listen My Guitar: The Life and Music of José Feliciano). Our colleague, a teacher of Spanish in a suburban school district that has a very small population of Hispanic students, developed this lesson to encourage her students who are native speakers of Spanish. The lesson also benefited her predominantly Anglo class because it brought to their attention José Feliciano's impact on the American music industry as well as on the Latino music industry worldwide. Because of the popular song "Feliz Navidad," students already knew his voice and musical ability. In his music video *Oye Guitarra Mía*, Mr. Feliciano's family life in Puerto Rico and the historical events that led him to become the first crossover Latino singer in the U.S. were highlighted. Thanks to interviews in his homeland during family festivals, both teacher and students are able to observe the close family ties and obvious pride that José and his family share about themselves and their island. One video segment traces the challenges that José encountered in the U.S.

What interested the educator most was the potential connection to U.S. history in the segment that featured José singing an innovative version of the national anthem at a baseball game in 1968. The furor that resulted from the artist's creative interpretation of the anthem in a country reeling from the effects of the Vietnam War era was reported in both the Spanish and the English press. Information was available at the artist's website on the Internet (<http://www.josefeliciano.com>).

The teacher designed a unit to last approximately two and one-half weeks, with part of each day's eighty-four minute instructional block designated to study Mr. Feliciano's life. The

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week-long introductory activity, described here, proceeded from interpretive to interpersonal and on to presentational tasks.

Day 1 - Interpretive: The students filled out a 5x8 index card with all the information they knew about José Feliciano. The card was put away for use in the assessment phase at the end of the two-week unit. Next, without a lyric sheet, students listened to Mr. Feliciano and Marc Anthony sing “Oye Guitarra Mía” twice. The goal was to have the students appreciate the song as a whole. The teacher gave the students a lyric sheet with words missing. They listened to the song a third and fourth time and were expected to fill in the missing words on the lyric page. Students were instructed to look at and analyze the sentence structure to see what kind of word was missing from the lyrics. For example, did they see the set-up for the subjunctive they had been studying? Is there a definite or indefinite article before the line, indicating they would need a noun? Analyzing sentence structure helped them make better decisions with respect to proper grammar. They were also told to check what might make more sense for the content.

Day 2 - Interpretive to Interpersonal: Once again students listened to the song. This time they sang along with the music video. The instructor divided the class into five groups, each group representing a stanza of the song and one group representing the chorus. They were given ten minutes to translate their section of the song into English. Students were told to use their dictionaries to look up only key words and then to write their translations in an acceptable format in English. They were advised that translating a song would require some manipulation, putting words in a format that makes sense and is appropriate in English without losing the integrity of the song.

This interpretive segment of the exercise was followed by a transition to the interpersonal phase by means of a teacher-led discussion addressing why songs and poetry are difficult to translate to another language. The discussion also addressed the poetic “license” the translator had to take sometimes in order to interpret the lyrics in the new language. The class members read their translated lyrics. Corrections were made by other students, or when necessary, by the teacher. Students were asked to think about their particular part of the song and its meaning as they prepared for the next day’s activity.

Day 3 - Interpersonal to Presentational: Students reconvened in small groups to discuss ways to illustrate their assigned section of the song. The teacher asked students to use as much imagination as possible, using very literal drawings or something that symbolized the definition

of a word. All discussion was in the target language. Each group selected one student to write the lyrics on a large display board. Students placed the illustrations on the board next to the appropriate verse in order to give visual form to Feliciano's lyrics. Each group shared its illustrations with

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the rest of the class. The other groups were allowed to question the decisions and to inquire why a particular image was chosen. They were encouraged to be as literal or interpretive as they wished with their illustrations, but to be prepared to tell the class what their artistic interpretations meant. Students presented very literal illustrations such as a guitar with a mouth drawn representing the line, “Oye guitarra mía, tú que sabes hablar mejor” (Listen my guitar, you who know how to speak better than I). Other groups were more involved in their interpretations. One group depicted the line “la negrura de los cielos me recuerda su mirada.” (the darkness of the skies reminds me of your countenance or look) by drawing a picture of the woman Feliciano sings about, illustrating her with dark eyes and dark skin.

Day 4 - Interpretive: The students were asked to write an analysis in Spanish about the song “Oye Guitarra Mía.” Questions such as “What was the artist attempting to say in the song lyrics?” helped the teacher assess student comprehension. In this activity, students recited lines of the song lyrics to support their interpretation. They also wrote a one-page paper expressing their personal opinion about the song, making the case for why they liked or disliked it. Students were responsible for the final edited version of this paper. It was later used in the assessment at the end of the two and one-half week unit.

Day 5 - Presentational: Students read their interpretations and discussed them in small groups. Similarities and differences of interpretations were identified and eliminated. The students place their work and the illustrations of the song lyrics on bulletin boards for the whole class to view. The music video was the principle element of technology. At each step of this lesson students were engaged on multiple levels. The assessment process was integrated into the unit's lessons to give immediate feedback to students as they progressed.

Lesson #3

The final example comes from a colleague in a private suburban high school. The lesson offers additional support for the use of emotional scaffolding dynamics reinforced by a pop icon, technology, and assessment. This next lesson further illustrates how emotional scaffolding

teaching practices are equally as effective with students who are not intimately associated with the pop icon by ethnicity, socio-economic circumstances, location, or direct association with the family. In this lesson the sheer power of contemporary music, the music video, and the song lyrics transcends all differences between the artist and the students to engage the students at their level of interest.

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The lesson emphasizes the interpretive and interpersonal modes of communication. The presentational mode of communication is explored through the students’ discussion regarding their ideas on how to make a music video about the song. Technology critical to this task included the recording “Qu’est-ce qui t’amène” (What brings you back?) from the compact disc *Couleurs et Parfums* (Colors and Perfumes), the music video “*Qu’est-ce qui t’amène*,” and Internet resources. Small group and individual comments reveal what students discovered about the artist.

In the song “Qu’est-ce qui t’amène,” the artist observes human behavior in love, life, and family. She sings in French on the platform of the train station in Fillmore, California, as an ethnically diverse cast enacts dramatic storylines within the station and around her.

The class knew very little about Carole Fredericks prior to this exercise. For the interpretive mode, the song “Qu’est-ce qui t’amène” was played twice for a junior class of French 4 honors students. Students were instructed to listen to the song and to then determine what style of music the song suggested to them. The teacher was looking for students to assign a musical idiom they were familiar with to the song and to awaken their powers of observation. It worked. One student commented, “I liked the soothing, warm quality of her voice. It was like hearing gospel music in French.” Another said, “It sounds like the Backstreet Boys; I like it!”

The second time the class listened to the song, students were asked to follow along with the lyrics. The teacher then asked students what they thought the song was about. Students wrote a variety of summaries. “I think Carole wants to show how love lasts forever, surviving breakups and obstacles.” “I think Carole believed in second chances and that we should be open to someone’s return.” “She wanted to show that love brings you back even if there are obstacles.” “It shows that people experience mixed feelings and strong emotions when dealing with love.”

This interpretive mode exercise was followed by an interpersonal activity that resulted in discussion. For the presentational mode the teacher placed students into small groups. In each group students discussed, using the target language, how they would make a music video to convey the messages they understood from the lyrics. The objective was to have students apply their imagination in combination with their interpretation of the music and lyrics to produce a presentational component. The discussion produced a variety of responses. One group wrote, “There should be rain, a person walking in rain or snow sadly looking for the guy of her dreams whom she finds and then asks the question *Qu’est-ce qui t’amène?*” An individual student offered, “I imagined a sadder video in a large city like New York. I saw Carole singing in the street while all kinds of people passed by. They all [the people] have experienced the feelings Carole expresses in the song.” Another said, “I imagined grey and two people fighting, then the singer in a lonely field while it is raining. Then her guy comes back in slow motion and the colors become bright again.”

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The homework assignment was to visit the pop icon’s website (<http://www.carolefredericks.net>) and to read her biography. Students were asked to find the section on “*Qu’est-ce qui t’amène*” and to view photos from the making of the music video. The homework assignment was followed the next day with a teacher-led discussion. To determine the students’ level of comprehension subsequent to reading a biography of Carole Fredericks in French, the teacher asked, “After reading the artist’s biography, what impressed you, touched you, or shocked you?” Students unanimously agreed they were impressed with the artist’s courage to move to a foreign country where she did not speak the language in order to follow a dream. The teacher also asked, “Now that you have seen the video, what impressed you, struck you or disappointed you? Did the clip communicate her message as you imagined the song to mean? How many examples did you see in the video that illustrate her message and asked the same question?” Lively conversation ensued. One of the instructor’s favorite comments from a junior summed up the point of view of most students:

I loved the video and I think it conveys the message well. Love is not always perfect; the couples weren’t all extremely beautiful people who walk off into the sunset. The power

of the message is that despite fights or age or long periods of absence, loves still brings you back to each other. Not even handcuffs and two heavily armed policemen could keep the man from his love.

At the end of the lesson, the teacher used the song “Qu’est-ce qui t’amène” as a lead-in for the distinction between the interrogative words *Qu’est-ce qui* vs. *Quel* and *Qu’est-ce que*. In other lessons this instructor used the song “Respire,” from the *Couleurs et Parfums* CD, to reinforce the ‘I’ and ‘R’ sounds in French. Often the students gently teased their teacher, commenting, “Ah, Madame, you can find a grammar lesson in anything.”

Conclusion

As Daniel Goleman (1997) suggests, and the authors of this article concur, there is a strong link between instructional design that engages students both intellectually and emotionally and higher academic performance. Jerry Rosiek’s (2003) emotional scaffolding dynamics - the tailoring of pedagogical representations that influence a students’ emotional response to some specific aspect of the subject matter- are teaching practices that are accessible to every classroom teacher regardless of the subject matter. The goal of this article is to illustrate these theories with examples of their practical application in the K-12 world language classroom.

Pop icons can serve as a conduit for the students’ emotional connection within the target language. If the artist is dedicated to improving the lives of others or presents a compelling life story, interest grows within the minds of both teacher and students. The challenge is to find an artist whose music and biography are readily available, and, more importantly, are appropriate for the classroom. The use of a contemporary pop icon can be a powerful ally in the classroom when lessons are designed to include assessment, emotional scaffolding dynamics, and technology.

It is the classroom teacher who is closest to the pulse of world language education and student learning dynamics. Therefore, it is the classroom teacher who has the most accurate contextual knowledge of what motivates students to learn within and outside of the classroom. Teachers’ powers of observation and experience are invaluable tools. Knowing what students gravitate to in their personal lives can be the key to unlocking self-motivation, thereby enhancing the learning process. This article was written to acknowledge the continued commitment and innovation of K-12 world language teachers and to encourage and, yes, inspire others to do the same.

Note: This article was originally printed by the Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, Gadbois, N. & Fredericks-Malone, C. (2005) "Assessment, emotional scaffolding, and technology: Powerful allies in the K-12 World language classroom. In P. Boyles, P. Sandrock (Eds.), *2005 Report of the Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. The Year of Languages: Challenges, Changes and Choices*, (pp. 197-206); and reprinted by the Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. In L. Langer de Ramirez, & R. M. Terry, (Eds) Fall/Winter 2005/2006 *NECTFL REVIEW: A journal of K-16+ Foreign Language Educators* (pp. 20-29)

Resources:

Carole Denise Fredericks Music Legacy LLC, <http://www.cdfmusiclegacy.com>

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