



International Agenda

Magazine of the Schoolcraft College International Institute (SCII) Volume 19, Number 1 Winter 2020

Windows on the World

Language and Communication Around the Globe

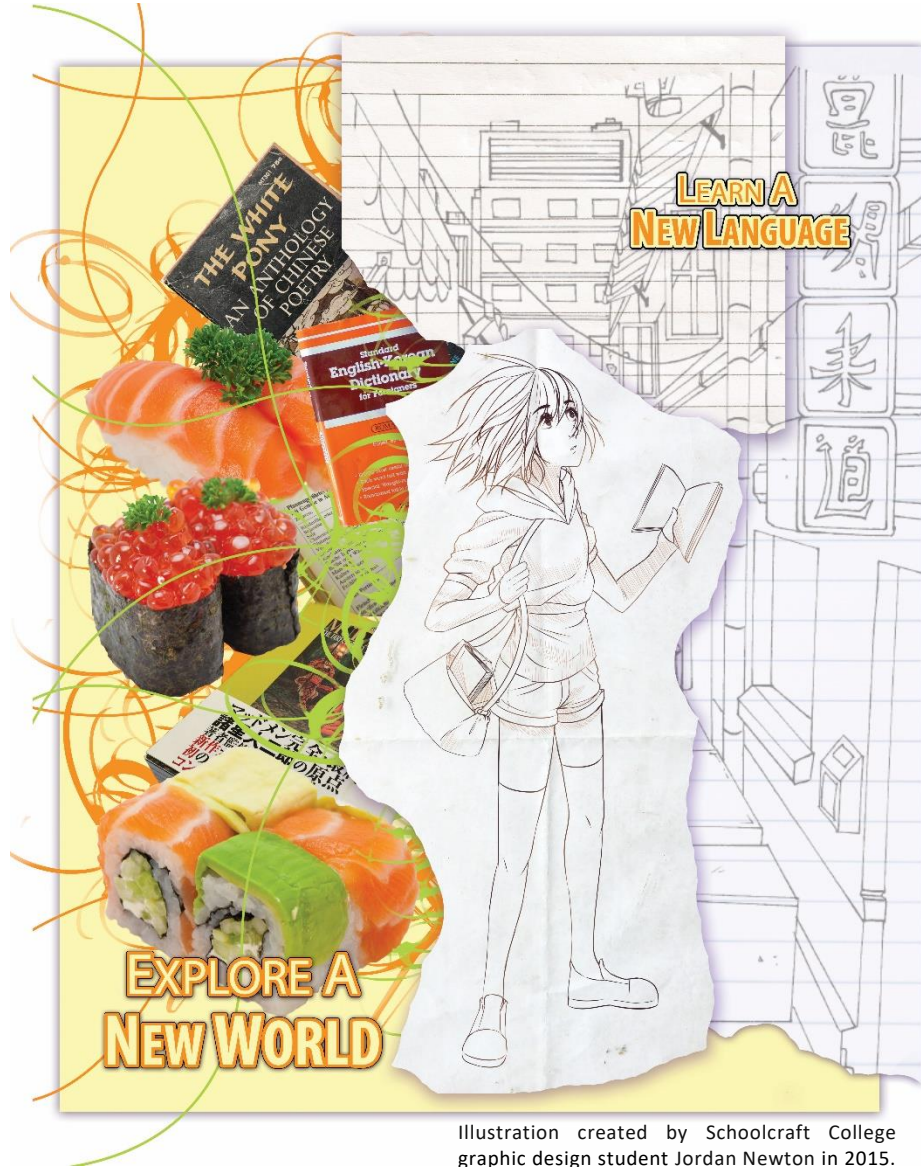


Illustration created by Schoolcraft College graphic design student Jordan Newton in 2015.

See pages 10-37 for coverage of the 2020 Focus Project, “Language and Communication Around the Globe”.

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International Agenda

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International Institute

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The mission of the Schoolcraft College International Institute is to coordinate cross-cultural learning opportunities for students, faculty, staff, and the community. The Institute strives to enhance the international content of coursework, programs, and other College activities so participants better appreciate both the diversities and commonalities among world cultures, and better understand the global forces shaping people’s lives.

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Take Our Survey!



After looking through these pages, kindly complete a brief online survey about *International Agenda*. The survey collects feedback about this issue, and suggestions for future issues.

The survey can be accessed at this URL:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/F3VS7Z9>

SCII Meeting Schedule

International Institute meetings are open to all who want to learn or to help out. New folks are always welcome. Meetings are on Fridays at 12-2 pm in the Liberal Arts Bldg. For the Winter term:

- January 17, 2020, room LA-200
- February 21, 2020, room LA-200
- May 8, 2020, room LA-130.

GlobalEYEzers

GlobalEYEzers, a group affiliated with SCII, meets over lunch for discussions of international/intercultural issues. Faculty and staff, as well as students and community members, are welcome. Meetings are on Fridays at 12-2 pm in the Liberal Arts Bldg. For the Winter term:

- March 20, 2020, room LA-200.

For more information, contact English Prof. Anna Maheshwari at amaheshw@schoolcraft.edu or 734-462-7188.



Schoolcraft College



April Midwest Conference at Schoolcraft College

All of our readers and other interested persons are cordially invited to attend the upcoming 26th Annual Conference of the Midwest Institute for International/Intercultural Education (MIIE). The meeting will be held on Friday-Saturday, April 3-4, 2020, right here at Schoolcraft College, and will draw participants from throughout the Midwest and beyond. Schoolcraft has previously hosted the MIIE conference in 2006 and 2016.

The gathering provides an opportunity to grapple with the question of how to make instruction and programming at schools across our region more internationally grounded and culturally sensitive. Major themes include ideas and strategies for curriculum development and study abroad, with a special emphasis on how our educational endeavor is affected by trends toward globalization and the growing importance of regions such as China, South Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Brazil. The intercultural strand also encourages consideration of issues within the U.S., such as cultural diversity, poverty, health care equity, immigration, and the conditions faced by international students.

In addition, the conference will provide opportunities to sample some choice tidbits of international food and culture.

Anyone with a contribution to make to education, in any field, may apply to give a presentation or participate at the conference. To obtain a registration form and other materials, contact Prof. Helen Ditouras at hditoura@schoolcraft.edu or 734-462-7263, or alternatively you can download them at <http://cincinnati.state.net/sites/default/files/uploadedfiles/Midwest%20Institute%202020%20Conference.docx>.

Students!



Enter the Winter 2020 International Agenda Writing and Artwork Contest

First Prize: \$250 Scholarship
Second Prize: \$150 Scholarship

...in each of the two categories, writing and artwork.

Winners from Fall 2019

Alexis Vahratian: First Prize, Artwork (see p. 39)
Jacob Miller: Second Prize, Artwork (see p. 37)
Kara Coleman: First Prize, Writing (see p. 8)
(No Second Prize was awarded in Writing)

Prize funds are provided by Schoolcraft's Office of Instruction.

Submission Deadline: April 6, 2020

Guidelines:

1. Students (or their faculty mentors) may enter essays, research papers, persuasive writing, creative writing, poetry, or 2D or 3D artwork suitable for publication in *International Agenda*.
2. Works may deal with any topic of international or cross-cultural interest.
3. Submit a digital version of the writing or artwork as an e-mail attachment to the address below.
4. Submissions will be judged by a panel of faculty and staff volunteers based on content, originality, and aesthetics.
5. Entrants will be asked to sign a form affirming that the work is their own and permitting it to be used in the magazine.

For copies of the entry form and the complete set of rules, go to <http://www.schoolcraft.edu/scii/international-agenda> or else contact:

Randy Schwartz
rschwart@schoolcraft.edu
tel. 734-462-7149
Office: BTC-510

Readers!



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Whether you're an on-campus or off-campus reader, we urge you to take out a free e-mail or postal subscription. This will ensure that you continue to receive the magazine twice a year, and will also strengthen your link with Schoolcraft College and its International Institute.

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Campus News & Kudos

Kudos to the **Asian Students Association**, its faculty advisor **Anna Maheshwari** (English), and **Todd Stowell** (Student Activities Office), who led in organizing Schoolcraft's first-ever Diwali celebration, featuring a catered Indian dinner and entertainment on Saturday, Nov. 2 from 6:30 pm to midnight in the VisTaTech Center. Diwali (sometimes transcribed as Deepavali) is the Hindu festival of lights, symbolizing the spiritual victory of light over darkness, goodness over evil, and knowledge over ignorance. The ASA and SAO also organized Schoolcraft's 13th annual Navratri Garba celebration on Friday, Oct. 4 at 7 pm to midnight in VisTaTech. A catered dinner, authentic music, costume, and dance, a marketplace, and prize competitions for Best Dressed Female, Best Dressed Male, and Best Dancer were all part of celebrating this Hindu festival. Navratri is traditionally a nine-day event held at the beginning of Autumn to regale the goddess Durga in hopes of a bountiful harvest.

Annika Sholander, who was hired at Schoolcraft last Summer as Content Expert/ Academic Success Coach for the International Learning Support Program (part of Learning Support Services), organized Cultural Coffee Corner events on Nov. 6 and Dec. 4 at Bradner Library. At these Wednesday late-morning events, all students (and faculty and staff) are invited to come meet peers of various world cultures over coffee and snacks. The get-togethers help to raise cultural awareness and promote a welcoming environment for our diverse college community. Annika, who graduated from Central Michigan Univ. last May and has had cross-cultural experiences in Thailand and India, is an expert in communication disorders, ASL, ESL, language, and culture.

Schoolcraft's **Amnesty International chapter**, led by student President **Alexandria "Allie" Drake** and assisted by Honors Program Clerk **Emily Podwoiski**, has been organizing a vigorous program of activities focused on the global refugee crisis and human rights abuses. With support from SCII's grant through the Midwest Institute for International/Intercultural Education (MIIE), the group is shining its main spotlight this year on Southeast Asia. In Lower Waterman on Oct. 3, with further funding from the **Livonia Human Relations Commission**, the chapter hosted a Coffee & Conversation presentation by the Director and 10-12 residents of **Freedom House Detroit**, which is a temporary home for indigent survivors of persecution from around the world who are seeking asylum in the U.S. and Canada. Many of the students from two Schoolcraft classes who attended were highly moved by the refugees' accounts of their ordeals, and donations of cash and household items were collected for this humanitarian effort. On Nov. 20 a "Write for Rights" activity was held in Lower Waterman, where students wrote letters demanding favorable resolution of 10 different human rights cases around the world. For the SC chapter, the headline case concerns Marinel Sumook Ubaldo, 22, a climate activist in the Philippines. Ms. Ubaldo, who survived the typhoon Haiyan that killed 6,000 in 2013, has been campaigning for thousands left homeless by the disaster to be properly rehomed. The nine

other cases are in Belarus, Canada, China, Egypt, Greece, Iran, Mexico, Nigeria, and South Sudan. At the AI Midwest Regional conference, held in Columbus, OH, in early November, Allie had met Nguyễn Ngọc Như Quỳnh, also known by her blogging pseudonym, Mẹ Nấm ("Mother Mushroom"). In 2017 this activist had been sentenced to a 10-year prison term for "conducting propaganda" against Vietnam, but the following year she was released from prison and sent into foreign exile after an AI letter-writing campaign. Allie has also met with the President of the Wayne State Univ. student chapter of AI.

The **Native American Club** organized a celebration of the Mexican festival *Dia de los Muertos* (Day of the Dead) on Oct. 30 in LA-475. Inspired by the tradition of *ofrenda* altars dedicated to ancestors, people brought photos and favorite dishes of their deceased loved ones to create a potluck "Ghost Supper". The early-afternoon meal was accompanied by a screening of "Food for the Ancestors", a PBS-TV documentary filmed in Mexico. **Karen Schaumann-Beltrán** (Sociology) is faculty advisor for the club. Students from her Sociology 209 class attended the event, along with others from Helen Ditouras's section of English 102 and Sandy Roney-Hays's section of Anthropology 211. The NAC also organized a Sep. 21 trip to the Nankin Mills Pow Wow, which is organized by the North American Indian Assn. of Detroit.

Lisa Jackson (Psychology) was interviewed by the *Michigan Daily* (student newspaper at the Univ. of Michigan in Ann Arbor) for a set of Nov. 8 articles marking the fifth anniversary of the shooting death of resident Aura Rosser by police. According to police reports at the time, Rosser, 40, an African American who suffered from mental illness and was the mother of three children, confronted officers with a knife inside a home on the west side of town. The fatality, the first police-involved shooting in Ann Arbor in more than 30 years, led to the appointment of Dr. Jackson and 10 other community members to the town's first-ever Police Oversight Commission. The body accepts and reviews citizen complaints, and has authority to conduct independent reviews and investigations and to recommend changes in police policies and procedures.

SCII Co-Chair **Helen Ditouras** (English) led a "Keep It Real Diverse" workshop for faculty, staff, and student leaders on Nov. 1 in the McDowell Center. This diversity training is based on an interactive game format that helps break down barriers and build trust across social differences. Helen also made a presentation to students, "Managing Conflict in the Workplace", on Nov. 21 in the Forum Bldg. Auditorium, as part of the "Reality Ready" series organized by SAO and the PTK Honor Society. SCII Co-Chair **Kim Lark** (History) was inspired by the "Reality Ready" initiative to organize a "Global Ready" initiative for this Winter semester. The goal is to have individual speakers and panelists from various industries in the area come to our campus in order to share with students a variety of career/ global/ cultural knowledge and perspective that is key in their jobs. •

R U READY 4 THE WORLD?

In today's world, you can get a lot further if you're knowledgeable about other peoples, countries, and cultures. We asked a few successful people to write brief summaries of how international awareness has figured into their lives and careers. Here's what they sent us...

While a student at the Univ. of Michigan I studied abroad. I never mastered a second language, so I had to go to a country that spoke English. I ended up in Cape Town, South Africa. While there, I made new friends from across the world, discovered public health, and found my career path. In 10 years, I've lived and worked in over 10 countries on food security and nutrition programs. When you open the door to new cities and countries, whether for work or play, you become brave. You learn how to navigate, how to order food, how to say thank you. You find a routine with stops that make you happy, like a coffee shop or local park. The world feels small when you see how much we all have in common. So go explore, you'll learn about yourself and meet some new people along the way. When someone asks you for directions because they think you live there, you'll know what I'm talking about.

— Melissa Antal, Washington, DC, co-founder and CEO of Foublie, a parents' nutrition advice platform



Spending a Summer in Yokohama, Japan, as a high school exchange student changed the course of my life— permanently and positively! Raised by Dutch immigrants in a very rural part of northern Michigan, I suddenly ditched my plans to study business at a small college, and moved to Ann Arbor to study Japanese at the vast Univ. of Michigan. There, I met another Japanese major who would eventually become my spouse and persuade me to raise our children to be bilingual. Throughout my career— as a teacher, professor, administrator, translator, and government/business consultant— I have learned from so many people having different linguistic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds than mine. I'm convinced that education is the best road toward world peace. My family is constantly engaged in grassroots diplomacy, "paying back" by hosting international visitors here in Michigan, and "paying forward" through volunteer activities promoting language/culture education. We are ready!

— Dr. Anne M. Hooghart, Senior Cultural/Public Relations Specialist, Consulate General of Japan in Detroit

Nothing lets us see our own country better than leaving it for awhile. If you have the chance to visit another culture, think about finding a job there so you can stay longer. Through a Fulbright exchange, the Peace Corps, and teaching jobs, I lived and worked for a year or more in each of Japan, New Zealand, Germany, El Salvador, England, and Morocco. In 1977-78, when I was teaching fifth grade at Dicken Elementary, I changed places for a year with a teacher in County Norfolk, England. With the Peace Corps in 1998 and 1999 I helped upgrade a university library in Tetouan, northern Morocco. Staying in such countries, with no expectations and an open mind, you'll gain insights into how people live, think, and deal with everyday problems, often very differently than Americans do. Realizing that the U.S. is unique in its government, privileges, and resources is one of the most valuable lessons from living and working overseas.

— Fran Lyman, retired librarian at Univ. of Michigan Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy



okay boomer [the world is on actual fire]

by Kara Coleman

okay boomer

i understand why you raise your voice at me
but don't mistake my knowledge for sympathy,
because sympathetic i am only to the worthy
and i disagree with any notion of your believing

okay boomer

let's discuss
the world is on fire and we've had enough,
you'll die and decay but we'll remain,
to clean up the mess every one of you made

okay boomer,

sure you'll be fine,
but my children won't live because i won't survive,
the way this is going, i'll have no home,
but alas, you enjoy your heaven and your golden throne.

okay boomer,

look down on me,
but if you're up so high, why can't you see
the damage you've caused, it's irreversible.
so why won't you help us to undo it all?

okay boomer

i'm not here to point fingers,
but i'm tired of being the generation you think jester
call me a snowflake, but i disagree
it's hard to be a snowflake in this kinda heat

okay boomer

it's your move now
the Amazon's on fire and the ice caps have drowned
but alas i'm still the one you say's in the wrong

okay boomer

Kara Coleman of Northville, MI, who wrote the poem on this page, is a science and engineering major at Schoolcraft College. She tells us that she wrote the poem in response to the catchphrase "OK Boomer", which became a popular Internet meme last Fall. The phrase is typically used in response to a Baby Boomer engaging in climate change denial, or saying anything else that's viewed as uneducated, invalid, or inappropriately judgmental. Kara writes, "The poem illustrates the divide between generations and how the lack of education on our environment and the unwillingness to work together might ultimately be the reason for our own extinction."

Melina Hernandez, of Livonia, MI, a Schoolcraft College student majoring in 3D and Video Graphics, created the illustration on the next page, "Save the Amazon", for an assignment last Fall in Computer Graphics Technology 226 (Digital Imaging 2 with Photoshop). Her instructor, Prof. Michael Mehall, asked each student to design a poster having international relevance. Melina superimposed images of the fire at the Notre-Dame cathedral in Paris last April with the ongoing burning of rainforests in the Amazon region, and posed the question: "This is still BURNING, this is not. What are you doing about it?". Her graphic forces us to consider why the Notre-Dame fire grabbed page-one attention around the world and billionaires sprang into action sending massive donations to repair the structure, while no similar urgent attention and action has ever been accorded the fire devastation in the Amazon, an actual threat to the future of human civilization. In 2019 there was a surge in the extent of the Amazon fires, which result from illegal efforts to clear forest for agriculture, ranching, and other operations, and which represent one of the major causes of climate change.

Save the Amazon

by Melina Hernandez



An Update on Our International Student Presence

At the Oct. 18, 2019 meeting of the Schoolcraft College International Institute, Laura LaVoie Leshok, International Coordinator and Senior Academic Advisor at the College, gave an update on our international student population.

The College, Laura reported, currently has 165 international students who are visa holders, including 131 F1 student visas. A total of 40 countries are represented among them. The top ones, in order, are Albania, Brazil, Romania, Nigeria, Vietnam, India, and Macedonia. According to government rules, people holding work visas are also allowed to attend school, but not full-time. Besides the 165 students mentioned, there are additional international students on campus who hold “green cards” (Permanent Resident Cards) or are U.S. citizens.

Recertification of the College as a participant in the visa process used to be free of charge, but it now costs \$1300 each time.

Under the Trump Administration, the number of denials or deferrals of visa requests has increased markedly, as have denials of entry at the border. Reportedly:

- Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) examines the last five years of social media posts for anyone seeking entry to the U.S.
- If a visa holder seeking entry is asked whether they have ever used marijuana and they say yes, this can be grounds for denial of entry. If a green card holder answers yes, this can be grounds for denial of citizenship.

SC now has an International Student Center, albeit with no budget specifically earmarked for it. It is located in the McDowell Center room MC-119, adjacent to the Advising Office. Laura is the full-time staff person there, Kyla Lahiff is a part-time on-call Academic Advisor, and there is a front-desk person as well. They now produce a newsletter that is e-mailed to the international students and has content that is relevant specifically to them, such as visa information.

Laura has informed the international students that if they ever need emergency help over the weekend, such as a signature on a legal form that is needed ASAP, then they should call Campus Police, who will then call Laura or Kyla.

Windows on the World: Language

On an average *single day* on planet Earth:

- over 4 million blog posts are published online, visible to the more than 3 billion people who have Internet access
- about 5 billion people exchange a total of more than 23 billion text messages with one another
- more than 300 billion e-mail messages are sent and received.

But what effect is all of this Internet chatter having on the ways that Earthlings communicate with each other, and on the human languages that we've been using for countless generations?

And why are some languages getting a lot more “airtime” than others? For example, why is only a fraction of 1% of global web content written in Arabic, when Arabic is the first language of more than 4% of the world's people?¹

Another question: Since all languages are vying for attention on a single platform— cyberspace— does this mean that one language like English will end up conquering the world, and all other languages will go extinct some day? Or does it mean that languages will gradually converge and mix together into a single unified language, whose character is yet to be determined? Or instead, will linguistic differences continue indefinitely because they don't even matter anymore, now that languages can be translated instantaneously on handheld devices and on earbuds with artificial intelligence?

These are the types of questions that we want to explore as part of a campus-wide focus of study for calendar year 2020, “Language and Communication Around the Globe”. The idea for this theme came from Suzanne Stichler, a Spanish and ESL instructor at Schoolcraft College. One night in February 2017 she lost an hour or two of sleep when she got the brainstorm, excitedly typed up her ideas about all of the issues that we could take up, and hit Send.

These focus projects, organized annually by the Schoolcraft College International Institute, have been hugely educational, challenging, and fun, helping to spread global awareness on campus and in the surrounding communities.

Enough Green for a Very Hungry Caterpillar

Let's get the “cha-ching!” out of the way first: One reason to study language is that there is money to be made and careers to be launched with it. Examples include language teaching and professional translating. Surprise!: linguistic diversity is both a curse and a blessing.

In the Babel story in the Book of Genesis, God punishes the human race for trying to build a city and a tower tall enough to reach heaven. He scatters the humans across the face of the Earth and curses them with a bewildering multiplicity of languages, so that they can no longer understand one another.

Today, we live in a profoundly globalized civilization, yet there is still a bewildering multiplicity of well over 6,000 languages. Communicating across such barriers is a huge chal-



A Japanese edition of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*

Missing Out on Asylum Because of Their Language

Professional translators throughout history have often landed in powerful or sensitive positions.

In the heyday of Ottoman Turkey, the men who translated for European ambassadors in Istanbul were Greek, Armenian, Jewish, and other Levantines fluent in Turkish, Arabic, Persian, and European languages; as a consequence of their intermediate position between East and West, these functionaries, known as *dragomans*, were able to wield considerable leverage over political and diplomatic affairs.²

Fast-forwarding to modern times, the world's peoples are far more mobile than in the past, and language experts play a pivotal role in human migration. Immigration processing in the U.S., for example, relies on interpreters for about 350 languages. That might sound like a lot, but the number of languages is inadequate and the number of interpreters hired is grossly inadequate.

The *New York Times* reported on a case in San Diego in which a Guatemalan woman seeking asylum had her hearing delayed by more than a year when there was no interpreter available for her language, Q'anjob'al. In another case, when there was no interpreter for a refugee whose first language was Mam, the court never heard that the man's whole family had been killed in their Guatemalan town— a fact that could have been grounds for asylum. In the last few years Q'anjob'al, Mam, and a third indigenous Mayan language, K'iche', have each entered the list of the top 25 languages spoken by those seeking haven in the U.S. via immigration courts.³

The new play “Arabic to English”, premiering in Ann Arbor this Spring, centers on the key role of an interpreter in an immigration case (see entry for Mar. 20 – Apr. 12 in the sidebar on page 15).

and Communication Around the Globe

lenge. But thanks to language teachers and professional translators, it is not altogether impossible for us to understand one another.

Imagine how many human and material resources in the world are poured into translation every year, and conversely, how many jobs such endeavors support and how much capital is harvested from the effort. *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, a 1969 children's book by Eric Carle, recently surpassed sales of 50 million copies worldwide, and this was possible only because the book has been translated into 65 different languages. *The Little Prince* (1943) has been translated into about 300 languages and dialects, with resulting sales of about 140 million copies worldwide.

Every week at *The Times en Español*, a team of editors— all native Spanish speakers— translates 40-50 articles and opinion pieces from *The New York Times* and publishes them for a worldwide audience. Meanwhile, in Beijing, the China International Publishing Group (CIPG) is a foreign-language press conglomerate directed by a British-born Chinese expert, Paul White. It publishes 34 magazines in 13 languages; runs a news website in 10 languages; and issues more than 4,000 book titles annually in more than 40 languages. CIPG also has its own think tank, the Academy of Contemporary China and World Studies, with branches all over the world doing research on international communication.

Every government, and every company that “goes global”, also needs translation services. And so far, we've only mentioned straightforward textual material— but translation is also needed by even larger global industries such as music, TV, film, and gaming (see the graphic by Jacob Miller on page 37).

Kasia Lynch, a young woman in southeastern Michigan, is an example of how people can build careers based on their knowledge of foreign languages and cultures. Kasia went to high school, college, and graduate school in Japan, and used her Japanese skills to start out in concert promotion. Later, she moved on to interpreting, translating, and other corporate services, especially for the electronics and automotive industries. Along the way she has had many interesting assignments; for example, read her blog entry⁴ about her stint as interpreter for the Peace Boat, a non-governmental humanitarian aid organization that promotes peace and sustainability in ports around the world.

A New Language Gives a New View of the World

Everyone who's ever learned a new language knows this truth:

Скільки мов ти знаєш – стільки разів ти людина.
Skil'ky mov ty znaješ – stil'ky raziv ty ljudyna.
How many languages you know – that many times you are a person.

— Pavlo Tychyna (1891 – 1967), Ukrainian poet, translator, and public activist.

Learning a second language can change how you see the world; and, by extension, when second languages become widely spoken in a community, they can change how that community sees the world.

Dean Smith of Berkley, Michigan, decided to study Chinese— on a whim. From scratch. In his retirement years! It was a scary but fun adventure that took him all the way to Wuhan, central China. As he recounts on pages 19-21 of this issue, he would hang out on city buses and in grocery stores to talk to the “real people”. They became his ‘teachers’ and his friends, and he soaked up their language and culture. One of the conclusions that he drew is crystallized in a Chinese proverb that he cites: “A different language is a different vision of life.”

Jhumpa Lahiri, a Bengali-American novelist, became so clear on this concept that she learned a third language, Italian, deliberately in order to gain a new view of the world. Then she moved to Rome, stopped using any language except her new one, and wrote a memoir about the experience— in Italian!⁵

Indeed, linguistic research going back more than a century has shown that different languages actually do encapsulate different views of the world; the most recent such study, reported in December 2019, is described in the sidebar on the next page. A few examples of words that hint at distinctive outlooks on the world:

- French *flâner*, to wander aimlessly through a city
- Japanese *shinrin-yoku*, the relaxation derived from being in nature
- German *sehnsucht*, a strong desire for an alternative life
- the Australian aborigine term *dadirri* means deep, reflective listening.

Every language represents the distillation of the thinking and outlook of a cultural group, developed over its entire history. This tremendous richness and diversity is why the words and concepts embedded in different languages are not essentially interchangeable. They are not perfectly translatable— with or without artificial intelligence!

In his article on literature in translation (pp. 27-29), Dr. Ken Seigneurie notes that these are essentially intractable problems that confront even the best professional translators. But in the end, he concludes that this predicament has some positive aspects: it reminds us that language communication itself is a complex task, an art; it underscores that verbal expression is unavoidably ambiguous because it reflects a rich social context; and it counsels us to keep in mind that there will always be more that we need to learn about a given culture.

If You Can't Speak the Language, Then You're Not Really at Home

The scholar Benedict Anderson spoke of “languages-of-power” that are more prestigious than other tongues and that foster national consciousness.⁶ “A language is a dialect with an army and navy” is a famous quip that interprets such “power” in an almost literal sense. The saying was popularized by a Yiddish

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linguist, Max Weinrich. Its truth can be seen in many parts of the world today. The use of Tibetan and of Turkic languages in western China are both shrinking relative to Chinese, as China exerts its domination over these regions. Similarly, the Belarus language is having a hard time standing up to Russian political and linguistic penetration. UNESCO lists Belarus as a vulnerable language, despite its estimated 4 million speakers.

Awumbuk Means “Social Hangover”

A large study in comparative linguistics published⁷ in Dec. 2019 found that in verbal expressions of emotion, there are notable similarities between languages that are geographic neighbors, but high variability between different language families.

The international research team was based at the Dept. of Psychology and Neuroscience of the Univ. of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. It used a technique of computational mapping in order to deal with a sample of 2,474 languages, which is more than one-third of those that exist. The languages ranged from big (millions of speakers) to small (thousands of speakers), and were selected from 20 major world linguistic families.

The team found that the semantics of emotions vary far more than the semantics of colors, which are already known to vary considerably across language families. A striking example is that in the Baining language of Papua New Guinea, the word *awumbuk* is used for a debilitating emotion that seems strange to Westerners. It is felt by a host when a guest leaves after having stayed overnight; for a few days, the host feels listless, unable to wake in the morning or to complete routine tasks. Although *awumbuk* is sometimes translated into English as “social hangover”, the translation cannot hide the fact that the emotion itself reflects a worldview or life experience that is alien to Western norms.

The study also concluded that in the various language families, emotion concepts have different patterns of colexification (where two concepts are denoted by the same word) and association (where two words are frequently related to one another). This implies that the simple correspondences found in translation devices and dictionaries are often misleading. A few examples:

- Persian does not have distinct words for “grief” and “regret”; instead, *aenduh* refers to both.
- In Dargwa, spoken in Dagestan in the Russian Caucasus, *dard* is used for both “grief” and “anxiety”.
- In Southeast Asia, “anxiety” is closely associated with “fear” in the Tai-Kadai languages, but is more associated with “grief” and “regret” in the Austroasiatic languages.
- “Anger” is associated with “envy” in the Nakh-Daghestanian languages of the Caucasus, but is more associated with “hate”, “bad”, and “proud” in the Austronesian languages of Indonesia and Polynesia.

But in most cases the retreat of a language is not “at the point of a gun”, even in a figurative sense. Instead, it results from a more subtle and complex dynamic. It is analogous to biological evolution: When a species goes extinct, generally that happens not because it is being killed off by a predator, but because its reproductive fitness has fallen below that of other species competing for the same niche. Today, for better or worse, English has the greatest fitness of any language on Earth; in fact, there are now more non-native than native speakers of English in the world. (Of course, with all of these diverse peoples learning English as their first, second, or third language, they tend to speak it in different ways and dialects that often reflect their “home” cultures.)

The dynamic was summarized well in an earlier issue of this magazine by Agustí Colomines of Barcelona, Spain, who directs the Linguapax Institute:

Many indigenous peoples, associating their disadvantaged social position with their culture, have come to believe that their languages are not worth retaining, since they do not have any prestige at all. They abandon their languages and cultures in order to overcome discrimination, to secure a livelihood, and enhance social mobility, or to reach to the global marketplace.⁸

In this issue (pp. 30-31), two Nigerian linguists explain that their Igbo language and culture are threatened today by twin processes: the increasing dominance of English and other European languages within Nigeria, and the massive migration of Nigerians to other countries in search of better opportunities. These twin processes, penetration and emigration, are essentially one and the same; both of them dilute and negate the indigenous cultural wealth and resources of the Igbo people. The authors describe an Igbo proverb to the effect that wealth and achievements aren’t truly felt *until they are brought home*.

Every oppressed people and every marginalized culture wants to be able to take the stage and stand on its own two feet. When a people is robbed of its language, it is robbed of a central part of its heritage and its homeland. That is why the banner of language rights is so often hoisted by people struggling for cultural and political autonomy. In addition to Igbo in Nigeria, examples include Catalan in Spain, French in Canada, Gaelic in Ireland, Bavarian in Germany, Quechua in Peru, and Berber in Morocco.

Language diversity is a touchstone issue. From a strictly economic point of view, it is irrational and inefficient to have the world trying to converse with a Babel of different tongues. Many people who see themselves as being “cosmopolitan” or even “multicultural” balk when it comes to multilingualism, because they evaluate society according to more narrow material criteria above all others. They don’t “get” the point that the extinction of a language irrevocably undermines the diversity of our linguistic heritage, and compromises the viability of the remaining stock of human culture.

An English-Only Planet?

If the trend toward language extinction continues to accelerate, where is all of this headed?



An evening class in Belarusian being taught in Brest, Belarus, a western city near the border with Poland. The classes are organized by Мова Нанова (Mova Nanova, “New Language”), a national movement launched by the poet Gleb Labadzenka. One of those attending, Yuliana Korzan, a 26-year-old worker in a furniture factory, told a reporter that she signed up for the class because she felt ashamed at not being able to speak Belarusian properly while being fluent in Russian.

Photo:
James Hill / *New York Times*, Jun. 30, 2019.

One possibility is the extinction of most human languages and the triumph of one or a few languages-of-power. According to UNESCO, nearly half of the world’s roughly 6,000 languages are endangered, and between 1950 and 2010 alone, 230 languages went extinct. Today, one-third of the world’s languages each have fewer than 1,000 speakers left. On average, every two weeks another language dies out with its last

speaker, and 50-90% of the remaining languages are predicted to disappear by the next century.

However, language endangerment is not in free-fall; there are some brakes on the process. First, languages, like certain other cultural practices such as food customs, are so bound up with

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They Stole Their Land and Their Language

In his new book *Lakota America*⁹, Pekka Hamalainen details the process by which the native people of the Dakota prairies were systematically robbed of their land and their language in the late 1800s. Missionaries and social reformers took children away from Lakota families and packed them off to boarding schools that were designed to erase indigenous language, religion, and culture. Hamalainen notes that even the white man’s word for the Lakota people, “Sioux”, was hateful: it derives from an Ojibwe word for “snake”, by which that rival tribe had referred to their old enemy.

Respect and disrespect have always been plentiful among the outsiders studying the native languages of North America. Leading lights within the tradition of respect include the Congregationalist pastor Jonathan Edwards the Younger, who studied Mohican in colonial New England; Catholic missionary Frederic Baraga, who worked among the Ojibwe of northern Michigan and northern Wisconsin in the 1800s; anthropologists Franz Boas and Ella Carla Deloria, who studied Dakota grammar on the Yankton Indian Reservation in South Dakota a century ago; and the anthropologist Alfred Kroeber among the Arapaho of Montana and the Yokuts of central California.

Michael D. Coe, a Mayanist at Yale who passed away last September, wrote that his fellow anthropologists never held the Mayan language in much regard because of their “unwillingness to grant the brown-skinned Maya a culture as complex as that of Europe, China or the Near East”, an attitude that he branded as “quasi-racism”.¹⁰ Mayan has a sophisticated and highly developed logosyllabic writing system that took Coe and others decades to decipher. J. Peter Denny at the Univ. of Western Ontario, who studied the Ojibwe and Inuit languages, concluded that linguistic development in societies that have been labelled “primitive” is no different than in those appraised

as complex: “abstract thought is just as highly developed and language is equally complex and flexible. To put it simply, there is no such thing as primitive thought or primitive language”.¹¹

The first step in rescuing endangered languages is to recognize their existence and their endangerment. Guatemala formally recognized 21 languages within the Mayan family as a consequence of the 1996 peace accord that ended an indigenous people’s insurrection. Mexico recognizes 63 indigenous languages within its territory, eight of them Mayan. According to recent figures from the government of Mexico, about 20% of the country’s population speaks one of those languages.

Indigenous people within the United States are far less numerous, and revitalizing their languages is a bigger challenge, yet there have been some successes. Mohegan, an Algonquin language of Connecticut, lay dormant for a century without surviving speakers, but has been revived over the past decade. In the Midwest, Prof. Margaret Noodin (formerly of the Univ. of Michigan and now at the Univ. of Wisconsin-Milwaukee) and others have developed courses, digital media, and online games to teach Anishinaabemowin, the Ojibwe term for their own language. Publications such as the Odanah, WI-based quarterly *Mazina’igan* (Ojibwe for “talking paper”, i.e., book) have also helped popularize the language. In conjunction with the UN-declared International Year of Indigenous Languages in 2019, Prof. Noodin and several other panelists spoke at “Indigenous Languages and Peoples in the Midwest”, a program held on Oct. 12 at the Newberry Library in Chicago. Earlier that year, on July 1, South Dakota enacted a law officially recognizing three indigenous languages (Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota).

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identity that they have *a lot* of staying power. Struggles for language autonomy, mentioned earlier, are only the most conscious expressions of this. Second, social media and other features of the Internet are a powerful potential tool for the protection of languages because they enable even isolated speakers to converse with one another on a daily basis.

In contrast to mass extinction and a monolingual future, a second foreseeable future is the increasing mixture or mash-up of languages, called *polylinguaging*. In this form of linguistic cross-fertilization, features that are formally associated with different languages are directly combined. One of the more stable types of polylinguaging is the hybrid dialect, such as Spanglish (Spanish and English), Portuñol or Portunhol (Portuguese and Spanish), and Franponais (French and Japanese). A more fluid type, increasingly common, is “code-switching”, in which speakers combine elements of two or more languages within one exchange—or even within one sentence or one word—according to the needs and opportunities of the moment and the language skills of the conversants. With polylinguaging on the rise, sociolinguists have begun to question the very notion of discrete and bounded languages, much as sociologists are questioning the traditional concept of discrete and bounded cultures.¹²

A third possible outcome, advocated by the Linguapax Institute, is for myriad diverse languages to continue to thrive and coexist. In addition to its many other activities in defense of languages, Linguapax has worked to showcase the rich linguistic and cultural diversity that immigrants bring to cities such as Barcelona when they refuse to abandon their languages and cultures. Mass migration is now rapidly creating many surprising language juxtapositions, and not just in big cities like Barcelona, London, and New York. The Filipino language Tagalog has overtaken German as the second most widely spoken language in the Canadian province of Manitoba. In Sweden, Arabic has overtaken Finnish in second place.

How You Can Participate

Faculty, students, and other readers can participate in this Focus project in a variety of ways.

Instructors can integrate relevant topics directly into coursework and campus programming by developing presentations, course readings and assignments, or student projects. Use the concepts and resources contained in this issue of the magazine as a jumping-off point. With a little creativity, instructors in many disciplines can participate fully.

SCII Faculty Co-Chair Helen Ditouras has played the lead role in organizing a free, year-long speaker series on the Schoolcraft College campus for students, staff, and the general public. Among the talks scheduled for this Winter are the following (check for more complete information on our website and on campus bulletin boards):

- Jan. 28 at 1 pm: Yusef Shakur (Detroit-area author and neighborhood activist), “Code-switching”
- Feb. 6 at 3 pm: John Brender (Dir., Confucius Institute, Wayne State Univ.), “My Foreign Language Journey”

Feb. 11 at 10 am: Lisa Lark (Director at Lambert & Co., Detroit), “Complexities of International Corporate Communications”

Mar. 25 at 10 am: Laura Kline (Senior Lecturer in Russian and Dir. of Global Studies, Wayne State Univ.), “Language: A Window into the World”.

These annual Focus Presentation Series have been hugely educational and popular, helping to spread global awareness on campus and in the surrounding communities. For example, about 80 people attended the Oct. 31 presentation on “Global Health Challenges”, given by Dr. Ijeoma Nnodim Opara of the Global Health Alliance at Wayne State Univ. She explained how the field of global health has evolved beyond the disease-centered approach and the charity model of mission-like trips, focusing instead on equity-centered long-term partnerships that are community-led, systems-based, inter-professional, reciprocal, and sustainable. The entire faculty is urged to recommend this series to students as an excellent way to gather insight and information. Some instructors might want to bring a whole class to a given event in the Focus Series (contact Helen at hditoura@schoolcraft.edu or 734-462-7263). Others might want to fold these into extra-credit opportunities for selected students.

There are also several relevant public events in Ann Arbor: see the sidebar on the next page.

To supplement these events and the articles in this magazine, you can extend your learning using materials from the Bradner and Radcliff Libraries on our campus. The library staff can help you locate a wide variety of books, videos, and other resources.

If you have relevant expertise or experience, offer to write an article for this magazine or to be part of our speaker series.

Let us know how you and your colleagues bring some global and multicultural perspective into your coursework this year!

Endnotes

1. Katherine Maher, Executive Director of Wikimedia Foundation, quoted in *New York Times Magazine*, Nov. 17, 2019, p. 57.
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3. Jennifer Medina, “Migrants’ Plight is Complicated by Interpreters”, *New York Times*, Mar. 22, 2019.
4. Kasia Lynch, “Relief To Be Rejected 3 Times”, *Ikigai Connections*, Oct. 31, 2019, <https://www.ikigaiconnections.com/relief-to-be-rejected-3-times>.
5. Jhumpa Lahiri, *In Altre Parole* (2015); translated into English by Ann Goldstein, *In Other Words* (New York: Knopf, 2016).
6. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised Edition (London: Verso, 1991), pp. 43-45.

7. Joshua Conrad Jackson, et al., “Emotional Semantics Show Both Cultural Variation and Universal Structure”, pp. 1517-1522; Perspective article by Asifa Majid, “Mapping Words Reveals Emotional Diversity”, pp. 1444-1445; both in *Science*, 366:6472 (Dec. 20, 2019).
8. Agustí Colomines i Companys, “The Defense of Languages, the Defense of Human Heritage”, *International Agenda*, Fall 2016, pp. 30-31.
9. Pekka Hamalainen, *Lakota America: A New History of Indigenous Power* (Yale Univ. Press, 2019).
10. Michael Coe, *Breaking the Maya Code* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1992, 1999, 2012).
11. J. Peter Denny, “Cultural Ecology of Mathematics: Ojibway and Inuit Hunters” in Michael P. Closs, ed., *Native American Mathematics* (Austin, TX: Univ. of Texas Press, 1986).
12. J. Normann Jørgensen, et al., “Polylinguaging in Superdiversity”, *Diversities*, 13:2 (2011), available online.



Bryan O'Brien/ *The Irish Times*, May 24, 2018

Bilingual (English and Irish Gaelic) signage in Dublin, Ireland, at a polling station for a nationwide referendum on abortion. These are the two official languages of Ireland, but current Irish president Michael D. Higgins has acknowledged that the push for Irish language rights remains an “unfinished project”.

Related Events in Ann Arbor, Michigan

Jan. – Apr. 2020: The Univ. of Michigan’s Frankel Ctr. for Judaic Studies is pursuing the theme “Yiddish Matters” during school year 2019-20, with many public talks, podcasts, conferences, concerts, and other events. Yiddish, the historical language of the European Jews, is endangered in many parts of the world and thriving in some other spots. Sample upcoming events include a Jan. 14 talk on “How Yiddish Tales Are Told”, and a Mar. 16 symposium on Global Yiddish Networks examining this rare case of a nationless language with global reach. For an overview of the theme, see <https://lsa.umich.edu/judaic/news-events/all-news/search-news/frankel-institute-events--yiddish-matters.html>. For details on specific forthcoming events, see <https://events.umich.edu/group/1059>.

Jan. 15, 2020: A conversation between Dr. Yevgenia Albats (noted Russian investigative journalist, political scientist, author, and radio host) and Ambassador Susan Elliott (recently retired U.S. diplomat) on the role of media and information in the evolving relationship between Russia and the U.S. Organized by the UM Weiser Diplomacy Center. 4-5:30 pm. Annenberg Auditorium, Weill Hall (Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy), Univ. of Michigan, 735 S. State Street. For more info, see <https://events.umich.edu/event/69579>.

Jan. 17, 2020: Dr. Joseph Hill (Asst. Prof., Dept. of American Sign Language and Interpreting Education, National Technical Institute for the Deaf, Rochester Inst. of Technology, New York) speaks about “Black, Deaf, and Disabled: Navigating the Institutional, Ideological, and Linguistic Barriers with Intersectional Identities in the United States”. Sponsored by the UM Dept. of Linguistics as part of the Martin Luther King, Jr., Symposium. The lecture will be given in American Sign Language; spoken English interpretation will be provided. 4-5:30 pm. Room 4448, East Hall, Univ. of Michigan, 530 Church Street. For more info, see <https://events.umich.edu/event/68927>.

Jan. 27, 2020: Dr. Yevgenia Albats (noted Russian investigative journalist, political scientist, author, and radio host) speaks about “The Russian Media: 30 Years After the Fall of the Berlin Wall”. Organized by the UM Center for Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies. 5:30 - 7 pm. Room 1010,

Weiser Hall, Univ. of Michigan, 500 Church Street. For more info, see <https://events.umich.edu/event/70723>.

Jan. 29, 2020: Davey Alba (*New York Times* technology reporter) and Ceren Budak (Assoc. Prof. at the UM School of Information and the College of Engineering) speak about “ Duterte’s Facebook-Fueled Rise to Power: Manipulating Public Opinion to Capture an Election” in the Philippines. Organized by the UM Knight-Wallace Fellowships for Journalists. 4-5:30 pm. Annenberg Auditorium, Weill Hall (Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy), Univ. of Michigan, 735 S. State Street. For more info, see <https://events.umich.edu/event/70103>.

Mar. 20 – Apr.12, 2020: World premiere of the play “Arabic to English” by David Wells. In a high-stakes immigration case, an Arab American man is accused of fraudulent marriage to gain a visa, and deportation will send him back to a life-threatening situation. When his interpreter, a young Arab American woman, receives a marriage proposal from his white American lawyer, she is caught between the image of a storybook American life, her blossoming feelings for the defendant, and her need to define her own identity, leaving it up to her which words to translate and which to leave unspoken. Theatre NOVA, 410 W. Huron Street, Ann Arbor. For more info and tickets, see <https://www.theatrenova.org> or call 734-635-8450.

Mar. 24, 2020: Marlyse Baptista (UM Prof. of Linguistics and of Afroamerican and African Studies) speaks about “*E pluribus unum*: Out of Many Voices, One Language”, exploring how in a multilingual setting, the languages spoken by speakers with different first languages coalesce to give rise to creole languages. 1-2 pm. Osterman Common Room (Rm. 1022), 202 S. Thayer Street Bldg. For more info, see <https://lsa.umich.edu/linguistics/news-events/all-events.detail.html/69996-17491341.html>.

May 2020: At the Univ. of Michigan there will be a conference on the feuilleton, which was a major genre of cultural and political communication during the period 1800-1950. The feuilleton was a type of entertaining discussion that was featured in Jewish and other newspapers across Europe and beyond. Watch <http://www.feuilletonproject.org> for more info.

My Undergrad Journey Learning Spanish and German

by John Brender

John Brender has been Director of the Confucius Institute at Wayne State University since 2008. He has taught Spanish, Japanese, linguistics, foreign language teaching methods, and English as a second language. His doctorate is in Higher Educational Administration and his research has focused on international student identity and values at American universities. In this essay, he describes his early language learning experiences (and follies) during his undergraduate years.

I grew up in Macomb County, Michigan, which I sometimes imagined was the absence of culture. By my senior year of high school, I did not know much, but after befriending a few international exchange students from Finland and Brazil, I had high hopes that there must be more to life than just keeping up lawns and voting down taxes. Coupled with a ringside seat to my father's midlife crisis, which he later attributed to limited travel and working for the same company his entire life, I was, at the age of 18, hell-bent on seeing the world, on prioritizing experiences over money, and on averting a mid-life crisis (spoiler alert: few do!).

Foreign language was not required at my high school back in the late 1970s, so I didn't take any. I did not even know what prepositions or adverbs were exactly, because they had not been covered by the "Schoolhouse Rock!" segments on Saturday morning television and my teachers either thought grammar was boring or struggled with it themselves. My acceptance to Hope College, a liberal arts college in Holland, MI, was contingent on enrolling in a foreign language course my first semester there, which seemed reasonable and even a little exciting. I agreed and enrolled. I chose Spanish because it sounded like something I would more likely encounter than French or German.

Despite the Drills, Languages Can be Fun

I can't say if it was fate or dumb luck, but I was placed in an introductory Spanish course with a professor who, by the end of my first semester, was so wildly popular that I got into his second-semester course only by ardently begging for an override. His name was Ion T. Agheana, and he had only recently joined my college's faculty from Dartmouth College, where he had been involved in the development of the Rassias method—a popular foreign-language teaching approach at the time that requires a great deal of acting out in the target language, followed by drill classes with choral responses and substitution drills. Prof. Agheana was a bit more eclectic than that and digressed into innumerable stories about his travels and about Winston Churchill. I remember that on the first day of class, he said, "Each of you knows at least 1000 words in Spanish!" We smiled skeptically. He then went on to explain that any word that ends in "-tion" in English ends in "-cion" in Spanish. Armed with 1000 words on the first day? I could make that work. I was sold!

I studied hard for the first exam and did well. On the second exam, however, I remember feeling suddenly confused and

trying to apply gender-based adjective endings to verbs and, well, *bombing!* In spite of the sea of red on my "exam", my ever-nurturing professor had somehow decided to give me a "B-" out of the goodness of his heart. He sat down with me at the end of class and in no uncertain terms told me that he had indeed been merciful and that he did not expect to have this kind of conversation with me again. He did not. I studied harder, went to language lab on a regular basis to repeat things over and over, and found ways of having fun with my classmates—mostly by

Study abroad experiences such as ours may have spawned reality TV.

intentionally annoying our friends by talking about them in Spanish in front of their faces—and, of course, by discussing people we thought were attractive.

I made friends with some of the Spanish-speaking students on campus and decided (against my parents' wishes) to travel to Spain during the Summer of my freshman year with Prof. Agheana and nine other students. It was a memorable Summer, packed with the kind of drama one would expect of 10 very different personalities who scarcely knew each other and suddenly found themselves together for extended periods of time. For some, it was too close for comfort at times, but there were no casualties. Come to think of it, study abroad experiences such as ours may have spawned reality TV!

My Freshman Spanish Actually Worked in Madrid!

The first thing I remember after arriving in Madrid was being assigned to live with a host family in an apartment building with two other students. Upon being dropped off in front of the building at about 9 pm, we realized that it was locked and we had no way to enter. When we finally saw two young ladies approach the building, one of my friends immediately tried speaking to her in English, but to no avail. I then piped up and said in salvageable Spanish that we were three American students who needed to enter this apartment because we were going to live with a family, "*Somos tres estudiantes de los estados unidos y necesitamos entrar este apartamento para vivir con una familia!*" It worked! She opened the door and we went to our respective host families. It was my first real "aha!" moment in a foreign language. I had communicated something necessary that contributed to my survival—and I realized that I might one day do it again!

The Summer went on with some highs and lows, but fortunately I was assigned to live with a roommate from another college who had been to Madrid before and had established a network of local friends. We got along like two peas in a pod and before long, we were going out every single night, often with the same two young ladies. It was platonic, but it was fun, and it helped me to learn Spanish. I am not, nor have I ever been, predisposed toward drinking or staying up late, but if it helped me improve my Spanish, I was in! I remember forcing myself to

stay awake, night after night, and taking much needed siestas every afternoon.

I also had a Spanish “brother” living with us, about 10 years my senior. His name was Roberto and he was warm and personable— and an excitable, chain-smoking, pro-Franco fascist. At any rate, I distinctly remember going with Roberto to a bar one Sunday morning and having a few icy-cold beers— without so much as eating breakfast. After about an hour of him

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telling me about Spain, asking questions about the U.S., and telling me his opinions on Eisenhower and Nixon, all the while blowing smoke in my face from a proximity I was not used to, he suddenly looked at me in astonishment and said in Spanish (he could not speak English at the time), “Do you realize you have been speaking to me in Spanish for the last hour???” There may be something to be said for alcohol and language learning (the alcohol certainly slows the prefrontal cortex and thereby disrupts decision-making and rational thought), because when I awoke from my siesta later that same morning, I could not repeat my performance— at least not for a while.

All in all, the Summer of '81 was a good one for me, and upon returning to college for my sophomore year, I decided to declare Spanish as my major and began taking German.

Whose German Skit Can Make the Class Laugh Most?

German was a bit more challenging than Spanish, but admittedly, I took it less seriously than Spanish. There was an extra gender (neuter) and something called a noun declension, which is how Germans can tell if you mean for your noun to be in the nominative, accusative, dative, or genitive case— a distinction about which Germans always seem to be curious in spite of already having a relatively rigid word order. Although I have been able to get around in Germany, hold conversations, and serve as a reluctant translator, I still have no idea how to decline a German noun without looking it up, and I can seldom guess which letters should come at the end of an accompanying adjective to make it correspond in both case and gender with the noun— at least not while I'm talking! As a German friend once said to me, “I have never heard an American utter a completely correct sentence in German.” There is little wonder in my mind why Mark Twain once said, “I would rather decline two drinks than one German adjective.”

The part about my German classes that stands out for me was the skits. We had a wonderful professor from Hannover, an unusually attractive and outdoorsy woman in her early 40s, who in spite of attaining her M.A. from the University of Chicago and her Ph.D. from Vanderbilt, still could not distinguish an English “v” from a “w” and had a seeming predilection for

ending her English sentences in verbs. I swear that while returning a lackluster exam to me once, she said, “You know, Johann, I think that for the next test you little bit more be studying should!” She was charming!

But back to the skits. Every other week we would be paired up with another classmate to write a skit on a proposed topic such as love, sports, or gender differences (it was still the '80s!). I happened to be paired with a lot of creative individuals and

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took a lot of pride in my own creativity. Each assignment came as a challenge, not so much to get a good grade (we never saw the grades on our skits), but to see who could make the class laugh the most. Class kudos were given especially to those who could write and perform a skit based on American pop culture that our isolated German professor was unlikely to understand.

A satire based on a popular American TV show or TV commercial was good for some confusion, but one of the best instances of confounding our poor *Lehrerin* was when someone translated Abbot and Costello's “Who's on First” comedy routine. The class was in stitches, and even more so as our poor professor looked utterly dumbfounded, shrugging her shoulders in surrender and saying, “Was?” “Wer ist im Zuerst? Was ist im Zwitte? Ich Weiss es nicht wer ist im Dritte?” It was probably a cruel joke in retrospect, but we all loved her.

Dealing with Southern Accents— in Spain

For the first semester of my senior year, I decided to go back to Spain, this time to Seville in the Andalusian south. No programs there were offered by my school, so I took the recommendation of a Spanish professor and enrolled in a program through a small school in Illinois that I had never heard of.

By this time my Spanish was conversational, and I had trained myself to speak with a reasonable Castilian accent. I was not, however, ready for the much less articulated form of Spanish spoken in Andalusia. A similar comparison in English might be traveling from Chicago to Biloxi, Mississippi. It is, at any rate, rarely the type of Spanish taught or modeled to non-native speakers.

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Undergrad Journey *continued from p. 17*

I had wonderful accommodations, a hospitable house mother in her 60s, her retiring husband, an American roommate from Santa Barbara, CA, whose Spanish was already perfect, and a prurient Australian neighbor who was studying Flamenco guitar and took his meals with us. Learning to understand Australian was my first order of business, and after figuring it out after a week or so, I found myself translating for my American friends, which truly infuriated my new Aussie mate. “@#%in’ Americans!”, he’d always say.

Opportunities to learn a language abroad are what you make of them, and although I thoroughly enjoyed my English banter over lunch, I managed to make friends with a young lady just a few years older than me, Carmen Reyes. Through a language exchange program offered by our institute, we were matched up when we walked into a room and someone said, “You go with her.” We both shrugged our shoulders, and proceeded to meet for beer, wine, and conversation virtually every single night for three months. She introduced me to her friends and family and at least a few new watering holes every night. To this day, it amazes me that Spanish people are perfectly happy to meet the same friends night after night. I feel lucky (and sometimes either needy or smothering) if I see my closest American friends more than twice in a month!

Little by little, my Spanish improved, although I still struggled with the Andalusian dialect. I remember going to Madrid one weekend and feeling quite confident with my Spanish. Upon returning to Seville, however, I strained desperately to understand the taxi driver that I hailed on my way home from the train station. Another time, my house mother arranged for me to spend a day at the beach with her niece, who was from the north. Before we left, she warned her niece to speak slowly because my Spanish was not very good. When we returned several hours later after some fun and interesting conversations, the niece said to my house mother, “What are you talking about? John’s Spanish is fine!” After a second or two of rumination, my house mother gathered her thoughts and said, “Ay, *es por mi acento!*” (Ah! It must be my accent!).

To Learn, You Must Expand Your Comfort Zone

There are many crazy stories to tell about my American classmates and their frequent *escándalos* that semester in Seville, but I reserve them for evenings out with friends. Unfortunately, it is far too common for many Americans studying abroad to stick with other Americans and non-natives, speaking English, eating hamburgers, and doing whatever it is that makes them feel at home. To really experience a culture, however, you must expand your comfort zone. You have to find ways to meet locals and ask about their foods, their interests, their passions, their hobbies, and their families. Praise everything you can but avoid criticism. Look into their eyes and laugh longer at a joke than you might normally do. You cannot simply be airdropped somewhere and expect to learn a language and culture through osmosis.

In my many years as both a student and faculty leader abroad, I would estimate that fewer than 20% of Americans make a truly sincere effort to ensconce themselves in a culture. It usually requires shunning what is easy and immediately gratifying in favor of doing something that is taxing and

sometimes uncomfortable. But it is extremely rewarding in the long run. Your language ability will improve, you will develop an extended appreciation for the arts, and you will develop another set of eyes to look at the world. Most of all, you will be able to decide which values you truly admire more in another culture and make them your own. Hospitality and friendship are two of those that many Americans have mentioned to me after studying abroad—virtually anywhere!

One of the stories I frequently tell my students has to do with writing in Spanish. I remember having an assignment based on Unamuno’s novel *Niebla* (The Fog) and putting together a literary argument that I thought was rock-solid. I could not

Unfortunately, it is far too common for many Americans studying abroad to stick with other Americans and non-natives, speaking English, eating hamburgers, and doing whatever it is that makes them feel at home. To really experience a culture, however, you must expand your comfort zone.

imagine getting anything other than an “A”, but lo and behold, the following week I saw a big “C” at the top of my paper. I had never received a “C” before on a Spanish essay, and I was devastated! When I asked my professor to explain the “C” (in Spanish, because she could not speak English), she told me that my paper was hard for her to understand. I took the essay home to my American roommate, who was uncommonly bilingual because his mother was from Spain and his father was Mexican. He read the essay and said, “When I read this with my American mind, it makes perfect sense, but when I read it with my Spanish mind, I want further explanations, more elaboration, more attempts to define exactly what you mean.” *Es decir que* (“that is to say”) became my go-to line for my next essay, and rather than stick to the rules of being succinct and linear, as I would in English, I took liberties in explaining myself, even when I thought it was completely unnecessary. I got an “A”.

After returning to the U.S. for my final semester of college, to an economy that was in a bit of a recession, I decided to go on a very different kind of adventure where jobs were plentiful: Japan. My uncle was an English professor in Tokyo at the time and I had made a few good Japanese friends in college, one who ultimately found a job for me through her old high-school principal. I was still on an insatiable quest to learn about the world beyond Macomb County, and while Spanish and German took me in slightly different directions, I decided that Japanese was bound to take me into quite another. But that story will have to be told some other time. •

It is Not Too Late: The Adventure of Learning Chinese Late in Life

by Dean Smith

After 35 years in the energy industry, Dean Smith retired and set out on new adventures, none of them even remotely related to the energy business: metal work/fabrication, furniture building, volunteer work, building restoration, 10 years as a motorcycle safety instructor, adventure travel, and, as described below, studying the Chinese language and culture. Smith studied accounting and finance at Central Michigan Univ. and at Wayne State University in Detroit, where he earned an MBA in finance. He lives in Berkley, MI, with his wife and a large backlog of “future projects”.

为时不晚

wéi shíbù wǎn

It is not too late.

Adventure. The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines “adventure” as (1) a risky undertaking, or (2) a remarkable and exciting experience.

My Chinese language learning experience definitely fits the definition of an adventure. While it never put me in peril, it has been a truly remarkable, exciting, and often frustrating experience that has taken me around the world, helped create some wonderful friendships, and taught my old eyes to see the world in ways that I never could have imagined.

Along the way, all that I’ve had to do is to follow the bright lights. I’ve also learned that learning a new language involves far more than learning new words.

I Took On a New Language as a Brain Challenge

My adventure began in January 2011. After retiring from a long career in the energy industry, I decided to go back to school. I didn’t have any particular goals— I just wanted to try something new, challenge my brain, and maybe learn a few new things. I enrolled at Oakland Community College (OCC). OCC’s Royal Oak, MI, campus offered a wide variety of classes and was close enough so that I could walk or ride my bicycle to class.

I signed up for Computer Graphics and Sociology, but the time slots left a two-hour gap between classes. Poring through the course guide, I stumbled across Beginning Chinese I (CHI 1510). I thought, “That might be fun.” Little did I know what I had gotten myself into! As Alice noted while she was in Wonderland, things just got “curiouser and curiouser”. And that was just the beginning.

My Chinese language professor at OCC was Dr. Yumin Lee, an energetic but also kind and patient teacher. Dr. Lee is



also an English teacher at OCC, well-versed in English language verb tenses, grammar, and sentence structures. She uses her background in English fundamentals to help her students bridge the differences between Chinese and English, and that made it a bit easier for my English-language brain to grasp Chinese-language fundamentals. Were it not for Dr. Lee’s combination of enthusiasm and patient guidance, my Chinese adventure would have ended with that first class. But it didn’t. There was a bright light to help guide the way. Dr. Lee created an environment that was both challenging and fun. After completing her class, I was hooked and hungry for more.

In January 2012, I enrolled in the Beginning Chinese II class at Wayne State University (WSU) in Detroit. Having been one of the top students just a year earlier at OCC, I confidently walked into the WSU classroom, ready to continue the adventure. I took a seat at the back of the room and sat down just

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as my new professor walked in. She greeted several of the students by name and then started speaking in a language that sounded a bit like Chinese, but I could only understand a few words of what she said. I was lost— totally lost. During class, I learned that my coursework at OCC had only covered half of the material that the WSU introductory class covers. In an instant, I was transformed from a top student to one who would struggle to stay afloat.

After class, I approached my new professor, Dr. Li Liang, and asked her for guidance. Grades weren’t so important to me, but I don’t deal well with failure. I didn’t know whether I should switch to the lower-level class, or stay in her class and work like

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Learning Chinese *continued from page 19*

crazy to keep up, or just quit and get a refund of my tuition and embark on some other adventure.

Professor Liang was a bright light. She came up with a plan that would allow me to stay in her class and provided an opportunity to make up for lost ground. I was invited to sit in on a Level I Chinese class and was also introduced to WSU's Confucius Institute (WSU CI) – a place where I could learn about Chinese language and culture, and maybe even get a little help with my homework. It was at this point that the light got a little brighter, the path opened up, and the adventure picked up speed.

With lots of study time and the help of the WSU CI graduate students, the disparate pieces slowly began to fit together. I made flash cards with Chinese characters and their pronunciation and meanings, and carried those flash cards everywhere. Classroom time gradually became less of a struggle and I really started to learn Chinese. I also began to volunteer at the WSU CI and participate in its activities.

Once I Went to China, I Was Hooked

An experience that changed my life was participating in the Confucius Institute's Summer Service Learning Program. Through that activity, I spent a few weeks in rural China, taught Chinese middle-school students about life in America, and used the trip to learn a little bit about China and its people (see photo below). My time overseas was an eye-opener: I found that I couldn't read Chinese menus, street signs, or food labels. My language skills were weak, and I was totally helpless—humbled might be a better description. But people were kind and helpful. I learned. I didn't die. I was hooked.

Back on campus at WSU, I continued my Chinese language studies and helped out at the Institute. The adventure took a new and exciting turn during a conversation with Professor Liang,



when she mentioned that there might be an opportunity to spend a whole year in China teaching English at her university in Wuhan, Hubei Province. I let her know that if the opportunity arose, I'd jump at it. I completed my online ESL training and became certified to teach English as a second language.

In August 2014 I flew to China, walked off the airplane into that new and unfamiliar world, and decided that I'd lost my mind. Once again, that horrible sensation of knowing that I had transformed from fully independent to wholly dependent set in. But this time around, there was a new light to guide me. Liu Ting, one of the WSU CI graduate students, had returned to China and she was a godsend. She showed me around campus, took me to the store, helped me get a phone and bus pass, and spoke English. If it were not for her kindness, my adjustment to life in China would have been an even bigger challenge. Bright lights shine the way.

On campus at Huazhong University of Science and Technology (HUST), I was able to get by. Most of the students had a pretty good grasp of the English language and were more than happy to practice their English by translating things for me. My co-workers spoke English. Meals were easy: I ate in a campus dining hall and was able to indicate my food selections by pointing and grunting. Not pretty, but I wasn't going to die from starvation.

However, I was in Wuhan, central China, and my new world was much bigger than the HUST campus. I decided that the best way for me to learn Chinese was to accept the struggle and try to do things for myself. Equipped with a camera, a Chinese phrase book, and a pen and small notepad, I set out on the biggest adventure of my life.

Where My "Profs" Were Shopkeepers and Other Real People

In Wuhan, I developed a routine of walking into stores during off-peak hours and



trying to get the clerks to talk with me. The night before each shopping excursion, I would spend hours making Chinese character shopping lists. I would practice pronunciation,

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although I usually got my words wrong. I took pictures of anything that had Chinese characters and spent time each evening learning their meanings. I learned to say “what is this?”, “how much does it cost?”.

Chinese culture tends toward politeness and, fortunately for me, also respects older people. But culture has limits. I quickly developed my “two-minute rule”: at each shop I entered, I gave myself less than two minutes to ask my questions, get my answers, make a purchase, and get out. That way, I could learn a little but not be too much of a pest.

Time was on my side: as the shopkeepers got to know me, they would spend time teaching me new words and helping me with pronunciation. The two-minute rule gradually faded away.

In exchange for the shopkeepers' help, all I had to do was occasionally help them out in return, perhaps by moving a heavy box or by grabbing something high up on a shelf. A few of the shopkeepers even tried to teach me about negotiating for better prices— so long as I promised to sharpen those skills in other shops! I would spend my days teaching some of the brightest students in China how to write English.

At the end of each day and on the way home from class, I would do my shopping and laugh and talk with the shopkeepers— the “real” Chinese people that I wanted to spend time with. This made learning fun and also



made me feel like I was part of the community. Everywhere I went, I had teachers.

Another thing that I did to force myself to learn Chinese was to take random rides on the Wuhan City buses. I would grab my Wuhan road map, walk off campus grounds, and hop on the first bus that showed up. I would ride that bus for a half-hour or so, get off, and hop on the next bus that came along. After another half-hour, I would get off the bus, walk around a bit, and then try to find my way back to campus. On the days that I became hopelessly lost, I'd find a bus that went to a subway stop and find my way home from there.

I really enjoyed those bus rides. I got to listen in on Chinese language conversations and occasionally understand some of what I heard. Through the bus windows, I saw people going about their daily business. I saw neighborhoods. Sometimes my fellow riders' curiosity would get the best of them and they would ask me why I was riding on a bus and where I was going. I learned that foreigners were rare on the Wuhan City buses and that foreigners traveling alone were even rarer. I met some wonderful people, had some great conversations, ate some good food, and also learned about public toilets. Those bus rides helped me build confidence in my ability to survive in a foreign land.

Three Key Lessons That I Learned

As I look back along the path that I've followed to learn Chinese, a few common themes emerge:

- First and foremost, language learners need to get used to failure. I can't count the number of times that I've been unable to read something, unable to understand what I've been told, or unable to convey a thought. I've learned that even when we speak slowly and loudly, sometimes the words just don't sink in. But when we really want to communicate, we will eventually find a way.
- Another common theme is that living is learning. You just can't help learning from the environment that you live in. Textbooks are good, but being there is better.
- Last and most important, I've learned that most people are kind and generous and will go out of their way to help random strangers. It is those real interactions with real people that make learning a new language worthwhile. And fun. •

语言不同，人生视角也不同。

Yǔyán bùtóng, rénshēng shìjiǎo yě bùtóng.

A different language is a different vision of life.

How to Survive in China Using Non-Verbal Communication

by Uta M. Stelson

Uta Stelson's previous reports on her experiences in China have appeared in our Fall 2016 and Winter 2018 issues. Originally from Germany, she is a lawyer, consultant, and educator based in Portland, OR. During 2015-19 she taught English and other subjects at a high school in Hefei, China, to students preparing to come to the U.S. for college. The arrangement was part of a partnership with Green River College (Auburn, WA) and was based on a cultural exchange visa. However, starting this Fall there has been increased scrutiny of foreigners working or traveling in the country; China now requires teachers from abroad to have a work visa, and Dr. Stelson had to return to the U.S.

When I first arrived in China four years ago to teach English as a Second Language (ESL) at a Chinese high school, I knew no Chinese, not even a single word, nor could I recognize even a single Chinese character. I quickly realized that I was functionally deaf, mute, and illiterate.

Fortunately, most programs that want to have foreign teachers will have one or possibly more people who have at least a working knowledge of English. These people are then “assigned” to help out the foreign teachers by showing them around and helping them get through the necessary bureaucratic steps that are required for foreigners to be able to work legally in China.

Additionally, most public accommodations use signs in both Chinese and English, or at least the Chinese characters are transcribed into Pinyin, the westernized form of the written Chinese language. For example, in all major cities that I have been to, such as Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Nanjing, and Hefei, all signs in the airport and subways are bilingual Chinese-English. Street signs in those cities will list the street name in both Chinese characters and in Pinyin.

However, in everyday life, such as shopping, meeting with people, taking a taxi, etc., non-verbal communication becomes essential if one doesn't speak the language. I have found that there are five main forms of non-verbal communication that are available to me: pre-written notes; gestures; digital translation; theatrics, such as miming; and observation of other people.

Using Pre-Written Notes

Using a written note as a “crutch” was the first method that I could think of when I arrived, seriously jetlagged, at my first assigned school. I asked my “handler”, the person assigned to help me get through the bureaucratic necessities, to write down the school address and the address of my apartment in a

notebook, which I then religiously carried *everywhere* with me. Having my two major destinations in written form with me at all times gave me a sense of security that I could always hail a taxi, show the driver the address where I wanted to go, and trust the driver to get me there.

The operative phrase here is “trust the driver”, as this method involves reliance on the taxi driver's knowledge of how to read Chinese. Most Chinese people do know how to read and write in their own language, but just as we have illiterate people in America, there are illiterate people in China. As taxi driving does not require an extensive ability to read or write, there is probably more illiteracy among taxi drivers than among many other professionals.

I have encountered two such drivers, which is probably lucky as I take taxis quite often in China. In the first such encounter, the driver drove me in what appeared to be the generally correct direction, and then pulled up somewhere to let me out. Since I could not see the building I was looking for, I used gestures to let him know that I didn't see which way to go. He gestured back to me that my location was on the other side of a construction fence. I trusted his directions and got out. But as it turned out, the building was not on the other side of the construction fence, nor was it to be found by exploring the entire city block around the fence. I concluded that he had not been able to read the written address of my destination and had let me off “somewhere”. At least it was a busy part of the city and not some desolate area, so I flagged down another taxi and went back to where I had started from. It was disappointing that I had had to spend money to get absolutely nowhere, but I considered myself lucky to get back to where I had started without any harm or major inconvenience.

The second encounter with an illiterate driver occurred a bit later, when I had at least learned to say the Chinese name of the street I lived on. However, Chinese has many dialects, as most languages do, and this driver may not only have been illiterate, but also may have been used to a different dialect (or maybe my pronunciation was really bad!). When he couldn't understand my verbal instruction of where to take me, I showed him my notebook with the written address, but he obviously couldn't read, so he politely motioned to me “No” by waving his hand. I took that as meaning, “No, I don't know where to go”, so I got out of his taxi and flagged down another one, where the driver could understand my verbal instruction. This made me feel better about my ability to make myself understood in Chinese, especially after he delivered me to the right destination. Overall, I felt better about this second time of having an illiterate driver as, at least, he hadn't taken my money and driven me to somewhere I didn't want to be.

While these two incidents might sound a bit scary, they were truly isolated incidents. By far, most of the taxi rides that I have taken in China have been positive experiences. Most taxi drivers in China are reliable and may even go out of their way to be helpful. This was the case when I was visiting my best friend in a nearby city for the first time. She lived in a newly constructed district, and all I had was a photo she had sent me of a slip of paper with her address written on it. I showed it to the taxi driver and he seemed to know right away where I wanted to go, but as we got almost to my destination, he asked me (through

gestures and a bit of broken English) which one of the several high-rises that formed the district was my destination. As I had never been there and didn't know what the building looked like, I couldn't help him. He then pulled over three or four times to ask the locals which building exactly we were looking for, and, after a few U-turns and tours around the block, found the right place and was clearly relieved that he had succeeded in getting me there.

In another case of a taxi driver's extreme kindness, I had mistakenly left one glove behind during a taxi ride in the Winter. It was apparently not until sometime in June that this driver had another fare to my school, but he had kept the single glove in his taxi the entire time and had not forgotten about it. On the day of his second fare to my school, he asked the security guards at the gate if I still worked there, which I did. He then waited for me to pass the gate on my way to class and returned the lone glove to me, nearly six months after I had lost it!

Using Gestures

While China appears to have a formalized form of sign language similar to American Sign Language, I do not know either of these formal sign languages which are designed to communicate with the hearing-impaired population.

Here, I am instead referring to certain gestures that are understood around the globe for their meaning, such as shrugging one's shoulders while holding one's hands up with the palms facing upwards as a signal of "I don't understand". I have to admit that that is probably the single most common piece of sign language that I use. I usually combine it with a verbal request, "English, please?", in hopes that the other person knows at least a little bit of English. Sometimes this works—the person does know a little bit of English and is willing to try it out, which I al-



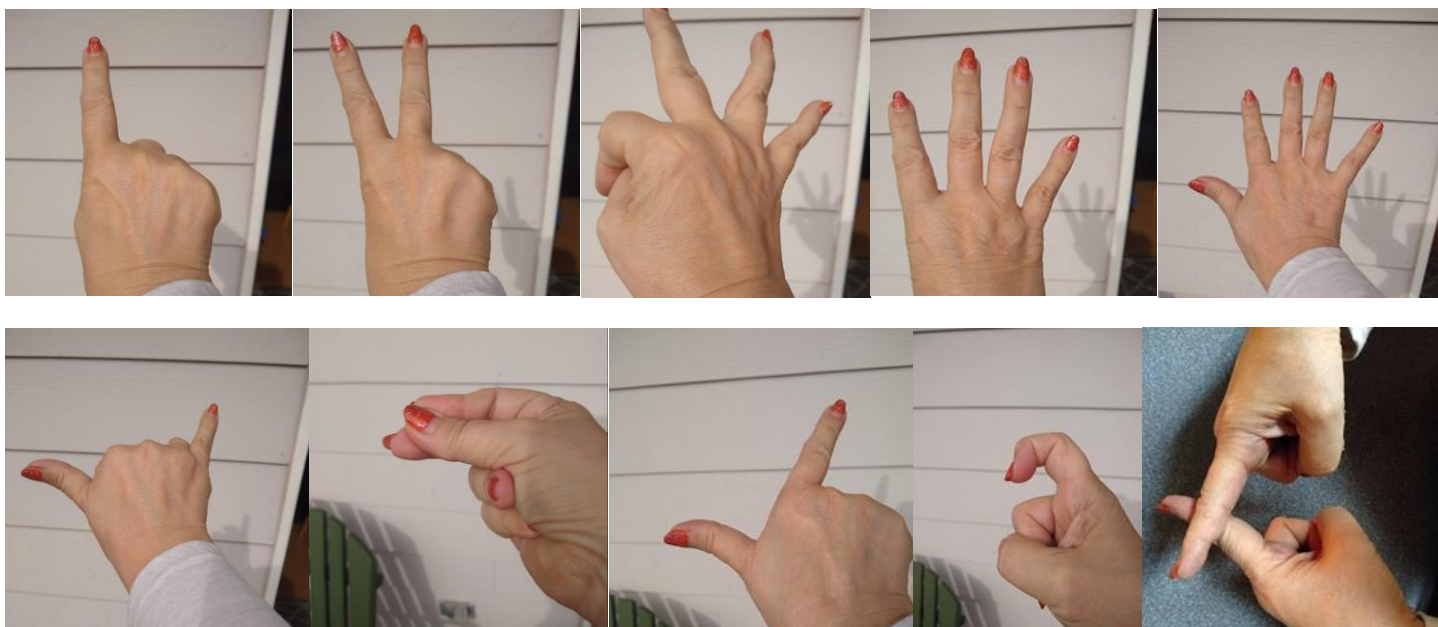
ways appreciate! Other times, the person apparently doesn't know any English and just gives up on the idea of a conversation.

Another universally known sign is, of course, using the index finger to point to something. When I'm out shopping, I often combine this signal with the universal symbol for "I want a handful": holding both of my cupped hands, pressing the lengths of the pinky fingers and side of the palms together, to indicate "I want about a handful of that".

Other common gestures that I use are to indicate numbers, although the Chinese system of indicating numbers non-verbally is a bit different from the Western system (see photos below). The numbers for 1, 2, 4, and 5 are the same: e.g., a raised index finger for 1, and adding one more finger to signal 2. But 3 is formed by raising the middle, ring, and pinky finger while folding down the index finger and covering it with the thumb. In China, the numbers 6-9 are signed with one hand only. The 6 is formed by raising the thumb and little finger (similar to the ASL sign for "I love you", but with the index finger folded down), and 7 is made by pressing the thumb against the index and middle finger, with the ring finger and pinky finger folded against the palm. The 8 is signed by raising the thumb and index finger, similar to how we indicated shooting someone with a pistol when we played "cops and robbers" as children. To sign the number 9, the index finger is raised with the first two digits folded downward, while all other fingers are folded against the palm and the thumb covering those folded fingers. The number 10 is the first number for which both hands are needed, as it is signed by forming both index fingers in a cross shape.

Indicating how many of something I want has always worked quite well for me, but one of my American friends had a different experience. She was getting coffee at a Chinese coffee chain (similar to the giant American coffee chain that uses a mermaid in its logo). While the American chain exists in China and has its Chinese employees well trained in the various ways in which Westerners like to have their coffee, this Chinese chain was not so savvy in its training approach. My friend wanted a

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Non-Verbal in China *continued from p. 23*

triple shot latté and used her fingers to indicate the number 3. She did not receive her triple shot, but instead she received three single shot lattés because apparently the barista had never heard of a triple shot.

Using direction gestures for taxi drivers is also somewhat routine for me, especially once I have come to know my surroundings a bit in a new city. These signals are very simple and intuitive: using the index finger to point left and right, pushing the outstretched index finger away from the body to show “straight ahead” and using the index finger to make the sign of a U in the air to indicate the need for a U-turn.

With these few simple signs and signals, I have been able to accomplish most of what I needed to do in China: go from Place A to Place B, go shopping, place orders in a supermarket, etc.

Using Digital Translation

There are now many apps available that help with translation. One of these is Google Translate. The problem with using any Google product in China is that, since Google ended its services in China in 2014, the apps don’t work unless you have a virtual private network (VPN) installed on your phone or tablet.

I was not aware of this problem until I first arrived in China, and so I could not use Google Translate—which partly explains my extensive use of other non-verbal means of communication in China. Even after I returned for my second term in China, now equipped with VPN and other helpful apps on my (American) phone, I didn’t find the apps too helpful, because the international use of phone became just prohibitively expensive with a \$10 per day use fee. To try to solve this cost problem, I resorted to buying a Chinese phone, but that meant that I could not download VPN or any Google app. Catch-22!

The ultimate solution to this quandary was to use a Chinese communication app, WeChat, which just about everybody in China has installed on their phone. This app, which is similar to What’sApp, allows for texting, spoken messages, free phone and video calls, and has a built-in function for translation between Chinese and English. The translation function has far less than 100% accuracy, but it’s at least good enough to help you understand the gist of what your Chinese counterpart is trying to tell you.

Using Theatrics and Miming

I use theatrics and miming only in very limited circumstances, as I am not an actress and generally don’t like to make a fool of myself. However, when around children and teenagers (as when I am teaching in China), especially if their language capabilities are limited, it can be a helpful communication tool.

For example, at the beginning of each term, I give students the rules about cell phone use in my classroom by explaining that, unlike many Chinese teachers, I’m not going to take their cell phones at the beginning of every class. I tell them it’s okay to use them to take pictures of the blackboard (instead of taking notes by hand) or to look up unfamiliar words with a dictionary

app. I then continue by demonstrating a couple of inappropriate cell phone uses by miming. I will stare intently at a space under the lectern while having both hands under there, too. At this point, a few of the students will start giving nervous laughs because they realize what it looks like to the teacher when they text each other during class. Then I will pretend to stare intently at my (imaginary) seat-neighbor’s phone, at which point a few more students start giving nervous laughs as they just realized that such a body position not only gives away their own inattention, but also their neighbor’s inappropriate use of his/her cell phone, usually watching a movie in class. While I could explain all of this in words, the student’s often limited English vocabulary makes the miming and theatrics much quicker and effective in conveying the message that I *will* catch anyone behaving in this manner. As the saying goes, a picture speaks a thousand words.

I have also found that theatrics and miming, especially in my history and civics classes, can be a quicker way of communication than using words. Imagine a history lesson dealing with Napoleon Bonaparte, but not knowing how this name is pronounced in Chinese. The students might be distracted from actually following the lesson because they are trying to figure out for most of the class who it is that I’m actually talking about. However, just showing the pose for which Bonaparte is most famous, tucking his right hand between the buttons of his uniform jacket, let’s everybody know in an instant who the lesson is about. Of course, including a picture of Napoleon in a PowerPoint presentation would serve the same purpose, but children seem to enjoy it more when their teacher uses theatrics. Another theatrical gesture that I use with a fair amount of frequency is to say “Well, damn!” while stamping my foot if someone in history was displeased with how an event played out. Imagine Richard Nixon having this reaction when he resigned from the presidency over the Watergate scandal.

Very occasionally I have used theatrics and miming around adults, usually if I either don’t know the person at all and never expect to see the person again, or if I know the person *very* well and I know that they will still be my friend, even if I make a fool of myself. In one incident that combined both of these scenarios, I went to a farmer’s market with my best Chinese friend. I recommended that she buy a vegetable which she was not familiar with and she asked me, using her phone translator, how it should be prepared. I didn’t want to spend 15 minutes typing a recipe into a phone, so I mimed how she should cook the vegetable. I pointed to the garlic and hot peppers the vendor also had available and motioned how to stir-fry the vegetable. My friend then asked the vendor how she would prepare the vegetable, and, to my amusement, the vendor, while also talking in Chinese, repeated my motions exactly!

Observing Other People

One thing that I found out pretty quickly after arriving in China is that there are certain ways to act that are different from the way people act in Western countries. For example, the custom of forming a waiting line (or as the Brits call it, a queue) is haphazard in China, at best. It works at the cash register in the supermarket, but does not work at the subway or train, no matter how many signs are painted on the floor telling people to queue up to the sides of the doors and to let people off the train before

getting on. Once the subway or train arrives, people waiting to get on will inevitably mob around the door and try to squeeze their way onto the train before letting others get out.

Sometimes, at a busy store or street stall, everyone around me would try to cut ahead of me. Not being fluent in Chinese, I could not tell those pushy people that it was my turn to be served, and I would have to rely instead on the kindness of store employees or street vendors. One street vendor in particular stood out for me for her kindness in this way. She owned the little stall where I would always get my breakfast on my way to school. I stopped at her stall every school day, and I always bought the same thing: marbled tea eggs (eggs that are hard-boiled in a marinade of tea, soy sauce, and star anise). I was one of only two foreigners who frequented the stall regularly, so she came to recognize me quickly. If I was teaching the first class of the day, the stall was always very busy with students buying breakfast. They didn't want to arrive late to school (the common punishment for that is to have to stand at the back of the class for an entire class period, or, in a case of more extreme tardiness, for the entire morning), so the students would be very pushy and try to cut in line ahead of me... not that there really was a "line". The saleswoman, however, would remember where I was in line and get my order ready, and just hand it to me while also listening to the orders that the students were calling out.

One behavior that I encountered in China that has become obsolete in both America and my native Germany is to have your vegetables weighed and priced in the supermarket before heading to the cash register. For many years now, I have been used to just placing my fruits and vegetables into a plastic bag and having them weighed at the cash register. In China, however, the cash registers are equipped with product-code scanners but not with scales for weighing. The first time that I brought my (unweighed) vegetables to the cash register, things were busy and the cashier simply set my vegetables aside and rang my order up without them. She said something in Chinese that I could not understand, but I presumed that it was an indication as to why I hadn't gotten my vegetables. The next time I went to that store, at a less busy time, I again forgot to have my vegetables weighed ahead of time, but the cashier was nice enough to ask the store's cleaning woman to go back to the vegetable section and have them weighed for me. After this, I remembered to always get my fresh produce weighed.

Other instances where I learned through observation included cases where I needed to buy subway tickets, to replenish the deposit on my subway card, or to purchase train tickets for travel around China. The people whom I observed varied widely, from the security guards at the subway station to a homeless person who had noticed that I had a fistful of change when all I needed were two coins. This person obviously hoped that by helping me get the correct ticket, he would end up with the rest of the change... and he was right!

Conclusion

While moving to a country without knowing the local language can be daunting, using nonverbal communication can help tremendously. This is especially true if the country has been exposed to Western non-verbal communications via mass media. Certain gestures are internationally well-known, while others may be more localized. However, a few helpful signals in the lo-

cal parlance are easier to learn than an entire language, especially one that uses non-European letters or characters.

In this day and age, electronic means of translation are only as far away as your cell phone, provided that you have phone service in the country you are visiting. Theatrics may not be a way that many of us want to communicate, but, depending on your audience and your own personal comfort level with looking a bit foolish, this may be another effective way of communicating non-verbally. Just maintain your sense of humor while using theatrics and miming. At other times, the correct behavior can be learned simply by observing the natives.

I would like to close, however, with a note of caution about relying on non-verbal communication. Some symbols that are very familiar to us in the context of our own culture may have a completely different meaning in other cultures. For example, the OK symbol of forming the O with your thumb and index finger while holding the remaining three fingers up straight can be interpreted quite differently depending on the cultural context. In China, this would be interpreted as a (somewhat poorly executed) sign for the number 3, while in my native Germany, this symbol is often used by a driver to let another driver know that they have just acted like an a**hole, which could potentially subject the driver using the symbol to criminal prosecution for defamation. Apparently, the symbol has the same meaning in American Sign Language. It is a good idea to be culturally aware of what can go wrong in nonverbal communication.

Discover Europe

May 14-24, 2020



Schoolcraft College World Languages Prof. Anita Süess Kaushik (asuess@schoolcraft.edu) is co-leading an 11-day Discover Europe tour this Spring. It will be the 13th such foreign study tour that Dr. Süess has led, with logistics handled by Explorica. The trip is not tied to any credit course, and community members are also welcome to join. Sites include Lucerne and Mount Titlis in Switzerland, Lake Como and Cinque Terre in Italy, Monaco, the Riviera and Provence regions of France, and Barcelona in Spain. Go to www.explorica.com/SuessKaushik-6329 for more info and to sign up (deadline is Jan. 25 to avoid a late fee).

How People Learn a First or Second Language

by Leonard S. Pasek

Leonard Pasek is a Spanish teacher currently at Talley Street Upper Elementary School in Decatur, GA, which was approved for International Baccalaureate status in Fall 2019. He has also taught ESOL (English to Students of Other Languages) classes to adults. Originally from Wyandotte, MI, Len earned a bachelor's degree in Spanish Language and International Business at Oakland Univ. and a master's degree in Spanish Language and International Trade at Eastern Michigan Univ., the latter including an internship with the International Trade Bank in Madrid, Spain. He also did an internship at the Library of Congress in 1977. Before switching to a teaching career, he was employed in the international automotive industry.

Language is ever-evolving, whether one is mastering a first language or one accepts the challenge and begins learning a second language. The latter is more widespread today than ever before, as English and certain other world languages such as Chinese, Spanish, Korean, Japanese, Arabic, and Russian are on the upswing. People travel from one end of the globe to another with increased frequency, and it makes sense to adapt to this world by learning more than one language as a tool to communicate for school, work, or leisure.

But what are the similarities and differences between learning a language as a first language and learning it as a second or “foreign” language?

Language is learned in phases. A child who is in the beginner phase of language acquisition often imitates their parents’ sounds. Their own first words usually express wants and desires; or, when words don’t matter, sounds do. A baby may communicate the discomfort of a wet diaper by crying, not even using words but mere sounds. Babies’ physical stamping of feet, physical aggression, or temper tantrums get the message across as well. But after many months, and finally a few years, vocal articulations, then words, phrases, and sentences, begin to emerge. Thus, communication between people can take many shapes, forms, and sounds. Even as we get older, we continue to make use of communicative elements beyond mere words and sentences. For example, a teenager may yell at his parents when a family car is not available to visit a friend after school.

What is common in all of these scenarios is the formation of simple or complex sounds all of which are repeated and learned from birth or shortly after second language acquisition begins. What is key is repetition: imitating over and over again patterns of sounds that convey meaning. At first the language learner may not even sound

like the person being imitated, but after a while the sounds will be understood.

Sounds are all around us and can be heard in and out of the home. We are so much bombarded by sound or noise that it is difficult to block it all out. So how do we make sense of all of these acoustical variations and how do we decipher language? How do we keep all of these signals straight and how can we conjure meaning?

Motivation and age definitely play a role in learning a language, along with a good memory that is able to retain about 500 of the most common words and expressions. In many cases, by the time a child enters pre-school s/he will have already practiced four to five years of listening, hearing, speaking, and basic writing of the birth language, which may include formal structures and even slang. Listening to and repeating words learned from other children on the playground, or writing on the sidewalk with chalk, are examples of ways that kids imitate language outside of home or school.

By comparison, the process for foreign language acquisition is accelerated. The intellect, consciousness, and objectivity of the second-language learner is generally much more fully formed than that of an infant or child. Further, some of the most basic early steps of language learning, such as sound articulation, may be abbreviated or unnecessary when learning a second language.

It is not uncommon for a beginner language student to learn what are referred to as simple verbal commands. This is analogous to a toddler imitating their parents’ commands, which are usually brief and negative in connotation (don’t do this, don’t do that, don’t sit there, stop doing this, don’t eat that, don’t play with that). A goal, although seldom stated explicitly, is to learn how to communicate with the least amount of words, and to express these words (embryonic sentences) as efficiently as possible.

What are learned next are grammatical structures, numbers, and common expressions, which involves how to create sentences— first and foremost, the use of syntax (knowing where to place words within a sentence to convey meaning). The placement of words within a sentence varies from one language to another. For example, English and Mandarin are SVO languages, meaning that the typical word order is Subject/ Verb/ Object; whereas German and Hindi are SOV languages, and Irish and Arabic are VSO.

Grammar rules or structures are often taught or learned in an academic or school setting, but they can also be learned by imitating others. However, it needs to be kept in mind that academic language often varies from language used at home or in everyday life. Saying “I wish I were you” (instead of “I wish I was you”), or learning the difference between “two”, “to”, and “too”, and between “there”, “their”, and “they’re”, are examples that reflect school or academic language.

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Literature in Translation: From Equivocality to Eyebrows

by Ken Seigneurie

Ken Seigneurie is Professor of World Literature at Simon Fraser Univ., Surrey, BC, Canada, and Supervising Editor of the six-volume A Companion to World Literature (Wiley Blackwell, 2020). Among his own books are Standing by the Ruins: Elegiac Humanism in Wartime and Postwar Lebanon (New York: Fordham Univ. Press, 2011) and Crisis and Memory: The Representation of Space in Modern Levantine Narrative (Wiesbaden, Germany: Reichert, 2003). Dr. Seigneurie, who was raised in Mt. Clemens, MI, earned dual undergraduate degrees at Michigan State Univ. and an M.A. and Ph.D. at the Univ. of Michigan.

Translation is basically bringing something from one place to another—a bag of flour, a bundle of cash, a meaning. The challenge of translation follows from the fact that language is equivocal and contexts vary: the meaning of any given term can never be tightly bundled, so bringing it into another language is similar to leaving a white streak as you drag the bag of flour over a concrete floor or admitting that some bills fluttered out the back of the armored car. The attrition of meaning bedevils translation. Imagine trying to carry into any other language the admiration, the irony, and the sheer fun of Frank Zappa’s quip that Pierre Boulez’s ensemble is, “the primo creamo of the contempo worldo” (Zwerin).

For a task so apparently simple and yet so impossible to execute with any degree of exactitude, literary translation enjoys surprisingly little esteem. It is not only a difficult, it is also a rare, means of promoting universal brotherhood. Literary translation brings the fundamental narratives of any given people to the world at large, forging strong links among nations, yet it performs its ministry in obscurity: a schoolchild reading “The Brahmin and the Mongoose” cares not that it was translated from French and before that from Arabic and before that from Persian and before that from Sanskrit whence it also branched off into East Asian languages via Chinese. So for those curious few, it is probably not the worst idea one could have to take time to flesh out some of the main questions around literary translation and its teaching.

Having already noted the problem of attrition, it is only fair to mention its flipside: meaning accretion. Call it gaining in translation, if you will, even if what is gained bends the arc of meaning from one culture to another.¹ Edward Fitzgerald’s free translation catapulted the 11th-Century Persian *Rubaiyat* (*rubā’iyāt*) of Omar Khayyam into a staple of Western world literature in 1859 (see Seyed-Gohrab). He rendered the Persian *Rubaiyat* into English by playing on the equivocality of terms between the languages, most famously in these lines:

A book of verses underneath the bough
A Jug of Wine, a loaf of bread and Thou
Beside me sitting in the wilderness.
O, wilderness were paradise enow.

An alternative version, by A. Z. Foreman from his website Poems Found in Translation, hews more closely to the original:

I want a book of poems, some red wine,
Some air to breathe, some bread on which to dine,
With you beside me in some empty ruin.
No Sultan’s state will be as sweet as mine.

Readers of Persian will be able to judge to what extent either translation successfully carries the original meaning into English:

تنگی می لعل خواهم و دیوانی
سد رمقی باید و نصف نانی
وانگه من و تو نشسته در ویرانی
خوشتر بود از مملکت سلطانی

The equivocality of language always makes fidelity to the original a holy grail, beautiful to imagine but impossible to attain.

It is also important to consider the role of contexts. In the case of Fitzgerald’s *Rubaiyat*, the poem’s success may also be attributed to the 19th-Century English context of reception. Think of *Hard Times* industrial capitalism, Benthamite utilitarianism, and imperialism’s fulsome pieties. Is it too rash to think that the simple pleasures evoked in Fitzgerald’s *Rubaiyat* might have been refreshing? One hundred years earlier, during the high point of Enlightenment rationality, Fitzgerald’s *Rubaiyat* might have found its readership limited to a tight circle of orientalists.

Domesticating or Foreignizing Priorities

In addition to the equivocality of language and the vagaries of historical contexts, other considerations affect the actual form of a printed translation. For general audiences publishers often prefer smooth translations that sound as close as possible to idiomatic English. They will go easy on the explanatory footnotes and often elide cultural distinctiveness in order to make the reader’s job easier by not drawing attention to the foreignness of the original text. Even for the Wiley Blackwell *Companion to World Literature* (<https://www.wiley.com/en-us/A+Companion+to+World+Literature-p-9781118993187>), which is aimed at advanced undergraduates and graduate students, we decided to render proper names in their commonly accepted English versions, so for example the Nobel Prize-winning Egyptian-Arab author’s name was rendered “Naguib Mahfouz” rather than the more accurate transliteration of “Najib Maḥfūz”.

It is always necessary to “domesticate” a foreign text to some extent—after all, that is the purpose of translation—but, taken too far, domesticating risks emulsifying the cul-

continued on next page

Literature in Translation *continued from p. 27*

tural distinctiveness of the foreign text.² A few years ago, a novel promoted as an example of Saudi Arabian “chick lit”, *Girls of Riyadh (Banāt al-Riyāḍ)* by Rajaa Alsanea (Rajā’ al-Šāni’), sparked a debate when the translator, Marilyn Booth, complained that the publisher and author flattened the cultural distinctiveness of the text for commercial purposes. As an example, Booth cited the following sentence from the Arabic original:

بعد السوق وكمية مناسبة من المغازلات البريئة
وغير البريئة، اتجهت الفتيات نحو أحد المطاعم
الراقية لتناول العشاء

Booth then noted:

I translated the sentence as: “After the mall, and a pretty satisfying number of innocent flirtatious exchanges, plus a few (a very few) that were not so innocent, the girls set their sights on the smart restaurant they had picked out for dinner.” This has become: “The girls made their way toward the elegant Italian restaurant they had picked out for dinner” (Alsanea, p. 17; cited in Booth, p. 203).

The vapid smugness of the published version vividly illustrates what Paul Valéry had in mind when he declared that he would never write a novel because he could never write a banality like, “The marquise left at five o’clock” (Verdussen). Others have no such compunction. For our purposes, the mush made of Booth’s wry and delicate translation sheds light on the tendency of domesticating translations to pander to the most meretricious of tastes.

Good translators are not afraid of the roughness that “foreignizing” translation can yield. In seeking to render the medieval Russian feel of Eugene Vodolazkin’s *Laurus (Jlaep)*, Lisa C. Hayden doesn’t hesitate to use archaic diction, spelling, and syntax in her translation: “A babe is in my wombe, for the custom of women is come upon me” (p. 63). Similarly, Richard Burton’s 1855 translation from the Arabic of the *One Thousand and One Nights (Alf lāyla wa-lāyla)* is foreignizing to the point of being at times almost word-for-word. He habitually translates the Arabic, *fariha farihan*, as “joyed with exceeding joy” rather than simply “elated”, preserving the original Arabic linguistic structure in English. In this way he introduces “the cognitive dissonance of foreign travel into the national culture” (Lemos Horta). Indeed, Hayden’s and Burton’s translations remind the reader that the text is not originally in English, and while such translations demand a bit more effort, the payoff is that readers glimpse meaning beyond the acceptations of their home culture. They acquire a broader cultural grasp and enrich their own language to boot.

Yet foreignizing translation can also veer into self-parody. So keen is Burton to rub the reader’s nose in foreignness that he arguably fetishizes it. When emphasizing the sexual voraciousness of a character, he chooses a pas-

sage from an Arabic manuscript stating that she has had 570 partners rather than another in which she is said to have had 90— still no mean feat, of course, but less outrageous than 570. Burton notes that “exaggeration is part of the humor” (p. 886, n17). Fair enough, but Burton’s translation and his notes also gratuitously accentuate the grossest of sexual, racial, and ethnic stereotypes, as offensive to mid-19th-Century as to contemporary norms. This is not just a quibble over transgressing contemporary moral pieties. Just as he goes with greater promiscuousness for humor, Burton also indulges in prurience as if the text’s literary merit would not suffice on its own (p. 884, n7). In the ostensible aim of widening his readership’s understanding, Burton’s foreignizing translation reduces literature to exoticism and unwittingly deepens the gulf between peoples by affirming the mean-spirited notion that the foreign is also the amoral.

To translate according to smooth and domesticating or rough and foreignizing priorities may be seen as practicing translation by the light of the target culture’s socio-cultural context. As necessary as it is to find an equilibrium between these tendencies for a given historical moment, the task of the literary translator goes further. If the “literary” is language that stimulates the imagination, literary translators must convey a meaning-feeling in the target language that is commensurate with that of the original. Translators therefore have to be *creative* just as writers who observe the world have to *translate* their responses into words. The best literary translators may not be able to render into the target language all of the nuances of the original, but their translation will be of literary value in its own right.

Implications for the Teaching of Literature

All of the considerations discussed above come into play when teaching world literature. If the instructor knows the original language, it is fruitful to spend a class period illustrating translation as mediation.

When I taught Rashid al-Daif’s *How the German Came to His Senses* from the Arabic (*‘Awdat al-almānī ila rushdih*), a novelized biography about a German gay man’s encounter with an Arab heterosexual, we examined in class the translation of *mithli*. At the time of the text’s publication in Arabic (2005) when the text was also translated, *mithli* was a relatively new term that could be rendered equally as “homosexual” or “gay”. Going with “homosexual” would have corresponded more closely to the neutrality of the Arabic term, but “homosexual” in English connoted at best a slightly stodgy, willful avoidance of the term “gay”, not to mention its five syllables repeated throughout the text would make for a bumpier read than “gay”. To go with “gay”, however, suggested a degree of acceptance on the part of the protagonist short of what he actually displayed. The translator (yours truly) had to decide whether to use “homosexual” for an accurate rendering of the Arabic but at the cost of making the protagonist appear in English as more stand-offish toward homosexuality than he is. Conversely, to use “gay” would have made the protagonist look more progressive than he is in the narrative. In class it was helpful to point out this dilemma as a way of illustrating translation as a choice among imperfect options and also to note the im-

portance of social context. FYI, in most instances I plumped for “gay” in the translation, and history was kind as *mithli-gay* had become the accepted pairing by the time the translation was published in 2015.

Even if the instructor does not know the original language, it can often be useful to compare published translations. In teaching *Don Quixote*, one does not need to know Spanish to find it useful to discuss the various translations of *Caballero de la triste figura*. Consider how “Knight of the Woeful Countenance” conveys a degree of august interiority that “Knight of the Sorry Face” cannot render, while “sorry” conveys some of the social animus (as in “That’s a sorry excuse”) that “woeful” misses.

Likewise, the ancient Chinese poem often called “The Dead Doe” from the *Shijing* yields kaleidoscopic beauty in various translations, none of which, by the way, adequately explain the intriguing link between the image of a dead deer and desire (Cai, pp. 72-73).

And no discussion of the inflections of translation would be complete without noting the venerable beauty of the apparently inaccurate King James version of the Bible alongside the more accurate but less compelling recent versions:

And it came to pass, as they departed from him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.... (Luke 9:33, King James Version)

And as the men were parting from him, Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is well that we are here; let us make three booths, one for you and one for Moses and one for Eli’jah”.... (Luke 9:33, Revised Standard Version)

“Booths”?! The word may be more accurate but it takes an effort and usage over time to overcome the resonances of “phone booths”, “broadcast booths” and even county fair “kissing booths”.

Teaching translated literature in a North American context can be a hard sell, but so is teaching any literature nowadays. The least we can do is teach literature as opposed to linguistic code, and in this mission translation can help. By concentrating on the way translation casts into relief the equivocality of language and the importance of social contexts, teachers can direct attention to the basic function of the language arts: the problem of conveying meaning in language. In contrast to the majority (even in schools and universities) who see language as a simple code corresponding to a discreet quantum of meaning—“Oh, you said this; therefore you must be that!”—studying literature in translation teaches us to chill our certitudes and warm our appreciation for the mystery of meaning in human societies. If “mystery” sounds too mystical, consider once again Frank Zappa, who even in 1984 recognized the value of computer code, but hastened to add: “What’s missing is the eyebrows” (Zwerin).

Endnotes

1. David Damrosch theorizes how texts can gain in translation in his *What Is World Literature?*
2. For characterizing translation according to its domesticating or foreignizing tendencies, see the work by Lawrence Venuti.

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Identification and Revitalization of Endangered Languages Around the Globe: A Look at Igbo Language

by Emmanuel Emeka Nwaoke and Ifeoma M. Nweze

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Language is one of the most significant symbols of a people's identity; it is the commonest means of communication and interaction and a useful means of experiencing the cultural, intellectual, and spiritual life of a people. A language is considered *endangered* if its continued viability is perceived to be in trouble and/or if its supposed native speakers abandon it for a more powerful or influential language.

Language endangerment can be *voluntary* or *involuntary*. It is voluntary if the native speakers deliberately choose to abandon their own language for another, and involuntary if, for example, the native speakers are banned from using their own language and are compelled to use a different one. Involuntary endangerment can also result from mass death as a result of genocide, war, or some other natural or artificial disaster that affects the existence of the people and the transmission of a language to a younger generation.

Assessing whether a language is endangered or not is a difficult task, especially when such task is being attempted by non-native speakers of the language. Research studies have identified three major factors that affect the viability of a language:

1. the number of speakers currently living within the speech community
2. the mean age of the fluent native speakers
3. the percentage of the youngest generation acquiring fluency with the language.

An attempt to halt or reverse the decline of a language or to revive an extinct one from endangerment is called *language revitalization*.

The endangerment of a language can be viewed from two different aspects: that of *users* (the population of native

speakers of the language) and that of *use* (the effectiveness/efficiency of its social and communicative function). If the language does not have a reliable number of people who claim it as their own, thereby resulting in inadequate transfer of same to their children, the language is endangered from the users' perspective. Alternatively, it could be endangered if it is being used for fewer daily activities and thereby loses its social or communicative functions among the native speakers. Hence, if the number of users is very few compared to the number of natives who claim the language as theirs, to a point that it may not be transferred to a younger generation; or if the younger generation ignores the language, not attending to its social and communicative functions; then the language is endangered.

Noriko Aikawa (2001) ranked five degrees of language endangerment:

1. extinct
2. critically endangered
3. severely endangered
4. definitely endangered
5. vulnerable (unsafe).

A language is in the **extinct** category if it is in a situation where there is no one that speaks or remembers the it; this simply suggests that the language has no speakers and has no documentation at all for reference purposes. A language is **critically endangered** if it is in a situation in which it is spoken by a few members of the oldest generation but cannot be transferred to a larger number of the younger generation be-



An Internet graphic of the global portrait of endangered languages as seen by UNESCO.

cause it is not used for everyday interactions. A **severely endangered** language is one spoken only by the supposed oldest generation of a speech community and few members of the other generations, and the younger generation does not have the opportunity to acquire or learn the language. When it is **definitely endangered**, the language is no longer acquired or learned as the mother tongue by children in the speech community; hence, it is hardly used in their daily transactions or interactions. However, a language is **vulnerable** when most children in the speech community speak the language as their mother tongue but its use may be restricted or limited to some specific social domains; in that case, the language may be used only in informal situations within a given social class.

Assessing the Status of Igbo Language

The term 'Igbo' refers to a people as well as a language; it is the Igbo people who own the Igbo language. Their homeland is in Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa, and the Igbo tribe is one of three major tribes that make up that country. Their current numbers in Nigeria are variously estimated at 20 million to more than 40 million, and there are additional Igbo native speakers in other countries.

The Igbo land in Nigeria is one of the most densely populated areas in the whole continent; Anokwulu (2013) states that it comprises approximately 15,800 square miles of southeastern Nigeria. The Igbo people are the predominant natives in the Nigerian states of Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo. There are other Igbos who are natives in two other southern states (Delta and Rivers), although some of them— for political reasons and other reasons known to them— deny the fact that they are Igbos; yet they speak dialects that are mutually intelligible with the Standard Igbo and with other dialects of the Igbo language.

The Igbo language has, at various points, faced involuntary endangerment. In 1966 there were anti-Igbo pogroms in Nigeria that claimed the lives of many unarmed Igbos and some other southern natives. This gave way to a more disastrous situation during the movement for independence of Biafra (Jul. 6, 1967 – Jan. 15, 1970), when the Igbos and their southern Nigerian brothers struggled for independence due to the marginalization and intimidation they suffer within Nigeria.

From the late 1990s to the present, the Igbo language has faced voluntary endangerment. Some Igbo elites view the language as one that is merely local and old-fashioned, and they hardly speak it to their children. Even some non-elites who can comfortably converse in the Igbo language go so far as to speak 'Un-English'— or similar substandard varieties of other popular world languages, such as French— instead of Igbo, feeling that it is only literate Nigerians who can speak, read, and write foreign languages.

Another key factor has been that many Igbo natives embraced migration to other developed and developing nations of the world in order to gain opportunities to harness, exploit, and exhibit their human potential. And because of that, their own children in the diaspora ended up embracing what linguists call *subtractive bilingualism*, or the learning of another language at the expense of one's own native language. Subtractive bilingualism is one of the major causes of the lang-

uage endangerment facing Igbo and some other languages in the world today.

UNESCO listed 29 Nigerian languages as endangered in its *Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger*, although Igbo is not one of them. Of the 29 languages, three (Bade, Gera, and Reshe) are categorized as vulnerable, and two others (Duguza and Polci cluster) as definitely endangered. Eight out of the 29 are noted as severely endangered (Fyem, Geji cluster, Gura, Gurdu-Mbaaru, Hya, Kona, Ndunda, and Ngwaba). Critically endangered, on the other hand, includes 14 other Nigerian languages (Akum, Bakpinka, Defaka, Dulbu, Gyem, Ilue, Jilbe, Kiong, Kudu-Camo, Luri, Mvanip, Sambe, Somyev, and Yangkam), while two languages are recorded as extinct (Odot and Zeem).

One might argue that the Igbo language is not endangered since it is not included in UNESCO's *Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger*. However, Igbo was listed in UNESCO's *Red Book of Endangered Languages*, and other studies have shown that Igbo stands the risk of possible extinction by the end of this century. Currently, Igbo exhibits various features of vulnerable languages. First, a great number of younger Igbo natives have not seen the need to embrace the language as an essential human and cultural heritage. Second, some native Igbo children are consciously or unconsciously restricted from using the Igbo language in formal situations: most of them are taught in schools, even in their tender years, using languages other than Igbo (typically English), while some Igbo parents are nonchalant in speaking the language to younger ones, thereby denying the children the opportunity of acquiring Igbo as their mother tongue or even learning it as a second language. This was the major reason why scholars of the Igbo language and culture, along with linguists, media, and non-governmental organizations, embraced the call for Igbo language revitalization.

Some concerned Igbos have helped identify the extent of endangerment to the Igbo language, and have also contributed by exposing the nature of the challenges facing the language and possible ways to overcome them. Their suggestions include:

- popularizing the need to embrace the Igbo language via electronic and print media
- making Igbo language a compulsory subject in primary and secondary schools and a core course in some universities in southeastern Nigeria
- and establishing Institutes of Igbo Language and Culture.

The Igbos should lay more emphasis on developing and securing the Igbo land, making it better than the best current cities of the world. They have the geographic, intellectual, and financial resources to achieve that feat, and it is another form of independence worth embracing. A popular Igbo adage states: *akụ ruo ụlọ a mara onye kpatara ya*, or, translated literally, *when wealth reaches home the achiever is known*. That is to say, the joy that accompanies wealth, riches, and achievements is felt and enjoyed most when it is brought home.

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Communicating in the USA: Guidelines for Visitors

by Marianne Brandt

Marianne Brandt of Northville, MI, is a licensed professional counselor, an intercultural consultant, and a member of the Editorial Committee for this magazine. She has worked in the intercultural field for many years, providing programs for Americans going on expatriate assignments to other countries as well as for foreigners coming to the U.S. on assignment. She was born in Germany and immigrated to the States in 1965. Marianne has lived and worked in Germany, China, and the U.S., and has also worked in Austria, Canada, Switzerland, and Ukraine. Prior to forming her own intercultural consulting company, Global Bonding, she worked in a tenured academic position at Wayne State Univ. in Detroit for over 20 years. What follows is a lightly edited version of the written guidelines that Marianne developed at Global Bonding for use when advising foreign visitors about communication customs in the U.S. The original title of the document was, "Intercultural Communication: Guidelines for Creating and Understanding Meaning in the USA".

While non-Americans were the original target audience of this document, it is also quite enlightening for Americans to use it a kind of mirror that shows what their communication customs look and sound like to outsiders.

Linguistic Dimensions

- *Learning English*
 - In order to function in your new environment, it is very important to learn the language. Don't be shy if your grammar is not perfect! Most Americans will appreciate your effort and admit that your possibly poor English will still be better than speaking your native language (which most Americans may not understand).
 - If you grew up in Europe, you were probably taught British English or The Queen's English. While most Americans really enjoy listening to British English, some of the vocabulary is different and can lead to miscommunication. Also, since many Americans use slang a lot, it will be helpful to familiarize yourself with the American English and its forms of slang. One very helpful and entertaining book that will help you familiarize yourself with American slang is *Speak English Like an American* by Amy Gillett.
- *Attitude of native speakers toward pronunciation & grammar errors*
 - A lot of Americans in the United States have some kind of foreign ancestry. Most are very open-minded and tolerant towards accents and many
 - actually connect positive memories with it ("You sound JUST like my grandmother!").
 - The general tolerance might also be to your disadvantage since many Americans will not correct your English as long as they are able to understand you. They mean to be friendly and don't want to hurt your feelings by correcting your English.
 - Some locals with little exposure to international residents have difficulties understanding English with a foreign accent. Don't take this personally! You may hear reactions ranging from "She does not even speak English!" to "Wow— you hardly even have an accent!" So, their reaction is not only based on your language skills but also on their listening skills and exposure to foreign accents.
- *"Business English"*
 - In the U.S., written business English is supposed to be brief and avoid "unnecessarily" difficult words (e.g., Latin-based words). In the words of an MBA graduate, "no one reads anymore". By comparison, academic English tends to use long sentences, many Latin- and Greek-based words, and brevity is not as valued. Written business English is often closer to spoken English than to written academic English.
 - Except for function- and industry-specific terminology, spoken business English is nearly identical to casual spoken English. Spoken business English sometimes allows words to serve as a different part of speech, e.g., turning the noun (n.) 'incentive' into the verb (v.) 'incentivize'.
 - Some words & phrases commonly used in business English include: leverage (v.), value, "create value", "fly at 60,000 feet", etc.
 - Note, however, that some of the vocabulary is gender-specific! Women speak differently from men.
 - The average American tends to expect people who are physically in the U.S. to be able to speak English, regardless of where they are from. Many believe that English is the national language of the U.S. – which is actually not the case. [The U.S. has never had an official language at the federal level.]
 - Therefore, you will find government forms (e.g., written driver's license test) in many different languages. In some ethnic neighborhoods, some classes are taught in a different language (e.g. Arabic in East Dearborn, Spanish in Florida, etc.). Surprisingly, many Americans believe that English is difficult to learn and won't expect perfection, just an honest attempt at learning the language.
 - Make sure you write emails in full words and sentences— don't use abbreviations that you may use, as in text messaging.

Paralinguistic Dimensions

- *Voice Volume*
 - Americans tend to keep their voices down in public places, including restaurants, malls, libraries, movie theaters, supermarkets, etc. An important exception is that Americans usually speak loudly at sporting events.
 - You can tell if it is acceptable to speak loudly if there is loud ambient music playing, as in a disco or a sports stadium.
 - People who speak loudly when it is inappropriate can be considered rude and selfish (for not caring about polluting the quiet public environment),
- *Intonation*
 - Foreign speakers of English sometimes sound monotonous to Americans; without intonation, American listeners may have difficulty understanding when a story is reaching climax/resolution and so they may “tune out” (stop paying attention to) the speaker.
- *Rhetorical style*, or “how to communicate a work issue with an American”
 - In American communities with a Northern- or Western-European cultural heritage, explanations are told in a linear style and with little contexting or description. Like a lawyer in a court room, the person explaining the issue or answering the question lists 1-3 reasons why something has happened. There may be other reasons, and the reasons may be interrelated, but these kinds of nuances often blur the message for the average American listener.
- *The use of silence*
 - Silence tends to make Americans feel uncomfortable, especially between casual or professional acquaintances.
- *The Art of Interrupting*
 - Americans may not always wait until finishing sentences and will interrupt in order to be heard. They call this “jumping in” and it is a sign of interest and participation— not of disrespect. If you were taught not to interrupt, it’s sometimes difficult “to get a word in” since you were conditioned not to “interrupt”.
- *Listening*
 - Most Americans are active listeners, indicating ongoing interest by soft sounds (“hmmmm”), nods, eye contact, and a tilted head.
- *Direct vs. Indirect Communication - What do Americans mean when they say:*
 - “Stop by anytime”— not necessarily an invitation. If you are interested, make sure you give them a call
 - “See you later” or “Talk to you later”— it may happen or may not happen (sometimes even when a specific day is mentioned, it may not happen). It is a closure, saying good bye. Don’t get disappointed.

Nonverbal Dimensions

- *Personal space*
 - Americans in conversation tend to keep a space between them about equal to the width of your shoulders; this distance grows closer for people in romantic relationships but stays the same for most other relationships. Maintaining personal space is related to Americans’ sense of privacy. Most Americans feel “crowded” when visiting some other cultures for the first time. They are less comfortable with people standing close to them.
- *Touching*
 - Touching between co-workers is limited to handshaking and some back/shoulder slapping between men and some hugging between women. There may be some hugging between men and women who do not have a romantic relationship (e.g., women with their grandchildren or grown children) in social settings but rarely in business settings.
- *Eye contact*
 - Americans tend to maintain eye contact during conversations and interpret avoidance of eye contact to indicate a lack of honesty or self-confidence. It is expected that speakers will periodically look away during conversation pauses, however. To maintain eye contact with an American speaker even during periods of silence will make him/her uncomfortable. Winks are sometimes used to indicate an unspoken connection between winker and “winkee”, although winking can also carry romantic meanings, so it’s better not to wink at people.
- *Facial expressions*
 - Americans tend to show their emotions on their faces. People who conceal their anger, joy and sadness are uncommon and can even be viewed with suspicion. Americans smile readily and often to show that they are friendly and to make others feel comfortable and welcome. This is not necessarily an invitation for a friendship.
- *Smell*
 - Americans take a shower/ bathe at least once a day, and even more sometimes during the Summer or when exercising. Body odor is not accepted, and the socially acceptable methods of fighting body odor are showering/ bathing plus using deodorant. Using cologne or perfume to mask body odor is not considered an effective method.
 - *Changing of clothes*— Most Americans change their clothes daily.

continued on next page

In the USA*continued from p. 33***Social Dimensions**

- *Meeting people*
 - To meet people from work and to see whether you want to get any closer with them, you can suggest having lunch together (“let’s get together for lunch” = usually everybody pays for him/herself). If you meet coworker(s) who you think could become good friends, you can invite him/her/them to your home for dinner. Be sure to invite the spouse, too. If the people have kids and you have kids, invite their entire family over.
 - To meet people outside of work, join community organizations like your homeowner’s association, attend social events at your church/temple/mosque, or attend meetings held by your city’s international business organization. Feel free to introduce yourself to others without a third-party introduction.
 - Know the difference between a polite invitation and a real invitation. When an American says, “You should come to our home sometime”, it is merely a polite expression. If the American says, “You should come to our home sometime... are you and your wife free this Friday evening?”, then this is a sincere invitation. If you want to get closer to someone who has not yet extended an invitation to you, you can invite them to your home first. Many Americans you work with will be happy to get closer to you, but you need to invite them into your personal space or else they will *respect your personal space* by not inviting themselves in. Also, reciprocity (returning an invitation) is not as important in the U.S. If the invited persons don’t return the invitation right away, it does not mean that they are not interested in continuing the friendship. Also, some Americans may be reluctant to invite people into their homes, they may rather host a get-together at a restaurant, but that totally depends on the people and/or the neighborhood you live in.
 - If you invite someone to an event/meal and they give a vague and/or monotone refusal, you probably do not need to try again: “Do you want to have lunch together?” --- “Sorry, I’m busy today.” If the refusal has a specific reason and maybe a suggested alternative meeting, the person would like to develop the relationship, but really has a time conflict: “Do you want to have lunch together?” --- “I’d love to, but I need to prepare for my presentation this afternoon, how about tomorrow?”.
- *Entertaining*
 - Arrive slightly early or on time for business meetings; arrive 5-10 minutes late for dinner at someone’s house (this gives the hostess extra time to prepare). If it’s a large party (e.g., a summer BBQ), some people might even arrive 30-60 minutes after the official start.
- Dress in business casual attire for a dinner party; it is generally unnecessary to dress up for this kind of event. Most Americans dress casually for social events except when going to the opera or a symphony concert.
- When invited for dinner in an American’s home, ask: “What I can I bring?” If the hostess says “nothing” bring something anyway, perhaps something from your own country, or a bottle of wine or a nice dessert. Give it to the host/hostess upon arrival; a gift dessert will be served that night but wine may not be.
- It is time to leave a dinner party when everyone else starts to leave! If you need to be the first one to leave, it is acceptable to find the host and hostess and explain that you must leave early because of X (give a reason). American hosts will sometimes signal that it is late and time for guests to go home by asking if everyone is full or tired or by making no effort to fill a lull in conversation (silence) with a new conversation topic. Also, when invited for dinner most Americans will probably leave before 11:00 p.m. especially if there are children present
- Seating at dinner parties is often unorganized and there is no significance to the seating arrangement other than the norm that the host and hostess usually sit at opposite ends of the long dinner table. Not everyone will wait for the hostess to be seated before starting to eat although it is a sign of courtesy.
- *Gifting*
 - Gift-giving is rare in American business and is generally limited by company policy to gifts of minor value, like stationery. To give/accept larger gifts is considered bribery. Some companies have an office gift exchange for Christmas, and there will be guidelines on what kinds of gifts to buy.
 - Outside of work, gifts are given for birthdays, weddings (if you receive an invitation), and pregnancies (if there is a baby shower). Managers give a card and/or a small gift on Administrative Professionals Day (previously Secretary’s Day), and sometimes put out a bowl of candy around Halloween.
 - When giving a gift, it should be wrapped or in a gift bag. Price tags must be removed. Recipients will thank the giver and open gifts immediately in order to compliment the gift giver’s taste/choice. Women tend to be more descriptive in their compliments toward gifts received.
 - Birthday gifts are given to friends and it can be *anything* that the friend would need or want. Wedding gifts are given at the wedding if you attend, or before the wedding if you do not; these gifts are often bought from a “wedding registry” and are almost always items for the couple’s new home (or future new home). Baby shower gifts are always baby items— clothes, toys, changing mats, etc.
 - Depending on the culture of the workplace, usually when it is your birthday your colleagues will buy you a gift, or else present a cake to share with your colleagues.

- *Courtesy*

- One way Americans indicate respect is by treating alternative points of view as theoretically tenable, even when they are not. Another is by letting others make their own decisions, even if they are guests (e.g., what they want to drink). Deference is shown by limiting argument with superiors. However, the art of deference seems to be dying in the U.S.
- “Please” and “thank you” are used frequently, as is “excuse me”, the last one even in situations where you don’t see anything that they did wrong. It may seem to you that Americans over-use these phrases, even with close friends.
- If you are asked to taste food or drink that you do not or cannot consume, you can say, “no, thank you” with a smile and the other person should accept it. Otherwise, just give your reason for refusing, and they should accept your refusal.
- If you receive a call from someone who dialed the wrong number, an appropriate response would be:
 - ◆ You – Hello?
 - ◆ Them – Hi, is Stacy available?
 - ◆ You – I’m sorry, you have the wrong number.
 - ◆ Them – I’m sorry!
- It is polite to hold the door open for a woman, to let women be served first, to let women enter a room first, etc. Instances in which it would be polite to make a woman do something second would be when the first person to do it will encounter difficulty, e.g., pushing through a crowded street after a sporting event.
- At meals with acquaintances, it is not polite to clean your teeth, pick your nose, speak with your mouth full or move food around your plate without eating it (most of this is probably the same in your own culture!). Also slurping your soup is unacceptable.
- Below are a few rules that might be new for you:
 - ◆ When passing a person closely, say “excuse me” (for intruding into their personal space).
 - ◆ When sneezing, also say “excuse me” (as an apology for potentially putting germs into the air). Children are now taught to sneeze or cough into their elbows and not into their hands for hygiene, and more and more adults do this as well.
 - ◆ Don’t blow your nose in the presence of others if you can avoid it. Some women will even excuse themselves to blow their noses in the privacy of a bathroom stall.
 - ◆ Don’t reach across somebody’s plate or into his/her personal space when at the dinner table. Ask the other person to pass the item to you, even if it would still be in your reach.
 - ◆ American children are taught to rest their left hand in their laps when eating a meal.
 - ◆ After cutting the meat on their plate, they will switch the fork to the right hand instead

of eating with the left hand. Americans do not eat “continental style”.

- ◆ In general, Americans are less formal. If you are on your best behavior, you should be fine.

- *Personal appearance*

- In professional settings, standing up straight conveys confidence, although sometimes sitting up straight can imply subservience. In long meetings, you will often see men lean back and get comfortable. Most men cross their legs “cowboy style” and the European way of crossing the legs is instead usually reserved for women, although you will occasionally see it with men.
- In professional environments, shirts are always tucked in, faces are clean-shaven, hair is smoothly combed and cut short (for men). Women have more freedom in their clothing choices, but they will dress conservatively and usually in subdued colors.
 - ◆ Men: Don’t combine a short-sleeve shirt and a sports coat. This is seen as bad style. Also, do not wear blue jeans to work unless it is “Jeans Day”.
 - ◆ The blue jeans rule applies to women as well.
 - ◆ Also, leather pants are not considered appropriate business attire.
 - ◆ Skirt lengths are usually more conservative than in Europe.
 - ◆ Many companies require women to wear pantyhose— even in Summer. A bra is an absolute must at all times!

- *Gestures*

- Americans nod their heads to mean “yes” and “I agree”. They shake their heads to mean “no” or “I do not agree”— other cultures (India) may do the opposite.
- Some young men give each other “high fives” when they experience success or are rewarded for something.
- Handshakes should be firm and limited to two “pumps”. Americans shake hands less often – usually just at the very first meeting.
- Confident American men will sometimes put their arm on an adjacent seat back or over their own seat’s back when in meetings or dinners. Managers will sometimes sit on their own desks and even on their subordinates’ desks.
- Shrugging your shoulders up means “I don’t know”.
- The “time out” gesture (left hand straight up while the right hand is across the left hand forming a “T”) means an imposed temporary suspension of activities, taking a break.
- Knocking on the table is not recognized as an applause or take-leave.
- Americans “cross their fingers” for good luck— other cultures (Germany) may press their thumbs inside their fingers.

Igbo Language *continued from p. 31*

The Igbos at home and those in the diaspora should see that the Igbo language and culture needs to be transmitted from one generation to the next. Language teachers and curriculum planners should embrace the use of Igbo and other native languages in teaching and learning. To enhance online teaching and learning of Igbo language and culture, free online catalogs should be established for documentation and accessing of relevant Igbo audio-visual materials. The right attitude toward the Igbo language and culture, especially among parents and guardians, would go a long way toward protecting the culture from further endangerment.

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Learning a Language *continued from p. 26*

How to figure out the meanings through context, name calling, praise, listening to older siblings, observing the reactions of people to situations of stress or calm, expressions used during the various times of day or periods of life or death— these are all learned moment by moment and day by day by the language learner, whether it is their first or second language. Language learned in church, language learned while playing games to express excitement, disappointment, happiness, and sadness or loss, terms learned to express endearment, direction, location, wants, and needs— these are learned on an as-needed basis over time.

Language teachers have found that oral or written stories help learners to understand and remember words and speech patterns. The drawings, sounds, actions, and physical movements provide synoptic connections that help form a basis of one's language. I have had training in Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling (TPRS), which is a specific approach or methodology in the classroom teaching of foreign languages. TPRS favors instructional modules that each have three steps or phases: (1) a set of new vocabulary elements is taught through a combination of translations, gestures, and personalized questions; (2) a spoken story that uses the new vocabulary is introduced to the class; and (3) the class reads a story or other highly contextualized material that uses the new vocabulary.

Identifying the correct use of language can be tricky, because imitation does not imply correctness. Unless someone corrects the expressions, words, phrases, or sounds of the learner, everything that is incorrect will be repeated in speech and/or in writing. In my personal experience, this actually happened when I used a word in Spanish for three months before an educated native Spanish speaker corrected me! Correcting someone is not always easy, because some people are easily offended. As a teacher of world languages, what I do when a student makes a mistake is simply to follow the mistake by repeating the correct version. This method is less obtrusive than it would be to admonish the student or to announce that they have made a mistake.

In the end, learning one's native language or a foreign language involves most of the same skill sets and massively-repetitive tasks of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. After continuous efforts that are made with conscientiousness and deliberation, one can communicate in any language with a fair degree of fluency.

Rocket League in the Olympics

by Jacob Miller



Rocket League is an e-sport, or organized professional video game competition, one of two to be featured in the Intel World Open that is scheduled just ahead of the Summer 2020 Olympics in Tokyo. The above illustration, “Rocket League in the Olympics”, is by Jacob Miller, a Schoolcraft College student who created the work in a section of Computer Graphics Technology 226 (Digital Imaging 2 with Photoshop) taught last Fall by Michael Mehall.

Prof. Mehall had assigned the students to design posters with international relevance. Jacob recalls, “I was struggling to find a topic for the project and eventually it just kind of came to me. I spend a lot of time playing video games, and I thought, ‘What is more international than the Olympics?’”. Jacob, who lives in Livonia, MI, told us that he is going into 3D and Video Production, and added, “I intend to pursue a career in storytelling, primarily through Game Design, but hopefully other media as well.”

The video game industry is now larger than the respective industries for movies, TV, music, or books. More than two billion people in the world play video games, typically on mobile phones. The current U.S. participation is 150 million people, 60% of whom game on a daily basis. Global revenue from professional e-sports leagues was expected to surpass \$1 billion in 2019, an increase of 27% from 2018. In Dec. 2019, Oakland University became the first NCAA Division I school in Michigan to create a varsity e-sports program.

Armenia: Recognition Delayed, But Not Forgotten

by Marjorie K. Nanian

Dr. Nanian is an attorney who was an adjunct instructor at Schoolcraft College during 2001-2016, teaching Political Science (American Government and International Relations) and Business Law. She currently lives in Dade City, FL.

My grandparents are dancing on their graves thanks to the recent action by the U.S. Congress to recognize the historical fact of the Armenian Genocide. And, my former Political Science students who used to do research papers on this event can fully understand the impact of the recent action: it negates Turkey's attempts to deny the Turkish role in the ethnic cleansing that took place a century ago.

On Oct. 29, the U.S. House of Representatives approved H.Res. 296 recognizing the 1915 events as genocide, and the Senate followed suit on Dec. 12 by adopting Sen. Resolution 150. Both resolutions declare recognition of the Armenian Genocide as part of the official policy of the United States, and encourage that the American public be educated about its facts and relevance. Presently, 49 of the 50 states acknowledge that the Ottoman Empire slaughtered 1½ million Armenian Christians under the cover of World War 1, and 15 of those states, including Michigan, require the teaching of this in their public schools. In Michigan, where I spearheaded the lobbying initiative, our committee joined forces with Jewish activists and we combined our bills to include the Nazi Holocaust.

My Grandparents' Ordeals

Two of my grandparents in Armenia, in what was then part of the Turkish Ottoman Empire, came to America prior to 1915 and thus were spared the horrors of the genocide itself, although there were many pogroms leading up to it. My other two grandparents, on opposite sides of my family, were both caught up in the ordeal of survival and escape.

When the events unfolded, my paternal grandfather, Aharon (pronounced "A-ha-ron") Nanian, was a five-year-old whose family lived in the village of Harput. In the account that was handed down to us, their Turkish neighbor, a *pasha* (high-ranking Ottoman official), offered to take Aharon into his household before the Turkish soldiers invaded the village, explaining that he couldn't save the whole family but he could save the youngest son. As Aharon was being led away from his childhood home by the *pasha*, the soldiers arrived, broke down the front door and killed everyone inside. Aharon stood on the top of a nearby hill, listening to the death screams of his family with tears rolling down his cheeks. The *pasha* put his hand on his shoulder and told him not to make a sound. He brought Aharon to Constantinople (now called Istanbul) and took him into his household as a serving boy.

Several years passed before the day that the *pasha* brought a newspaper to share with Aharon. It had an ad from Aharon's half-sister in America. She was searching for him. The *pasha* told Aharon that his place was with his family or what was left of his

family. He then purchased passage for Aharon on a Greek ship and gave him a bag of gold coins to start his new life in a country where the streets were said to be lined with gold.

When Aharon arrived in New York harbor, he stood at the railing of the ship dressed in baggy pantaloons, curled-up toe slippers and a red fez on his head, looking at the Statue of Liberty. A man approached Aharon and informed him that he couldn't enter the country with a bag of gold. So, without thinking, Aharon threw the bag of gold into the harbor and began his new life penniless and with the American name of Arthur.

My maternal grandmother, Makrouhi (pronounced "Makrew-he"), had a more difficult experience. At the time of the invasion, she was 21 and married, with a five-year old daughter, but her husband had already gone overseas. Men in her village of Van took up arms to defend themselves against the Turkish army. Under a volley of gunshots, Makrouhi escaped with her daughter, younger sister, and two brothers, and they began a long trek southward. Along the way, one of the brothers died of a head injury, and the daughter died of starvation. Makrouhi, with her sister and the surviving brother, made it to Baghdad in Iraq, and from there they took a riverboat further south down the Tigris. Eventually they ended up in Bombay (now Mumbai), India, where they stayed in a British refugee camp for two years before Makrouhi was allowed to depart for America to join her husband. Upon naturalization, Makrouhi became Margo.

The tragic events in Armenia spurred the first international humanitarian aid campaign in the U.S., known as Near East Relief. It was established in 1915 to aid survivors of Turkey's ethnic cleansing. In the 1920s, child movie star Jackie Coogan, who would later play Uncle Fester on the TV series "The Addams Family", was the frontperson in a Near East Relief campaign for the orphans of the Armenian Genocide. He urged school children to donate their pennies for the "Starving Armenians". A few years later, in 1919, the organization was chartered by act of Congress, and eventually it had raised \$116 million in aid and saved the lives of more than a million refugees. Today, it exists as the Near East Foundation (Syracuse, NY).

With the recent U.S. declaration on the genocide, my grandparents and their relatives, together with other Armenians everywhere, have been vindicated. After 104 years, their tragic history is finally being recognized. Whenever I encounter difficult times, I think back to the painful ordeal of these two grandparents of mine and realize that my own problems are minor in comparison, and I can work through them.

As for Turkey, their denialist government is furious with the actions of our U.S. Congress. They are threatening to deport the Armenians again and to shut down U.S. operations at Incirlik Air Base, which ironically was built on three farms that had been confiscated from Armenians. •

To learn more about the events a century ago, see our Fall 2018 issue for "Sarah's Story: A Family Flees the Armenian Genocide" by Michelle Andonian and Robert K. Ourlian.



“Recognition of the Armenian Genocide” is a poster by Alexis R. Vahratian, 21, of Northville, MI, a graphic design major at Schoolcraft College. She created it for a class assignment on internationally relevant posters last Fall, when she was enrolled in a section of Computer Graphics Technology 226 (Digital Imaging 2 with Photoshop) with Prof. Michael Mehall.



This studio photo, taken in Turkey shortly before the Armenian Genocide there, shows Marjorie Nanian’s grandfather, Aharon Nanian, and his family. Aharon is the boy in the middle holding a studio gun, with bullets strapped across his chest.

Mental Health Problems as Symptoms of Social Crisis

by Titas Biswas

After reading our two issues last year focused on “Exploring Physical and Mental Health Issues in a Global Environment”, frequent contributor Titas Biswas felt that the coverage of mental health issues was too sparse, and that it tended to portray mental health problems as problems of individuals rather than problems created by social structures and institutions. The Editor encouraged her to write up her views on this subject, and the following article is the result. Titas is a student working toward a bachelor’s degree in sociology at Jadavpur University in Kolkata, West Bengal, India. Her most recent previous article for this magazine was “Students Without Borders: The Contemporary Language of Dissent in an Era of Compelled Homogeneity” (Winter 2019). She has also written for several other publications, including the Global Daily Tribune (Kolkata), Anarchimedia, and The Perspectives Blog.

Most people know George Orwell’s novel *Animal Farm* as a metaphorical account of the evolution of the Soviet Union. However, many of us do not know about the Introduction to the book, in which Orwell had compared the nature of the British state with that of Stalin’s regime and pointed out how the two were actually not very different from each other. The reason this isn’t well-known is that the Introduction had been omitted in most of the earlier editions of the book. The ideas found in *Animal Farm* stir very pertinent and basic questions regarding the future of human beings and the complex issues of social control and obedience, including:

- How does psychological manipulation affect the propensity of individuals to obey institutions of authority?
- How much credibility does the health care industry have, and what are its long-term effects on mental health and wellbeing?
- Is there a true definition of “madness” or is it a purely social construct?

Of relevance to any discussion of psychological manipulation are the classic experiments by psychologist Stanley Milgram regarding obedience to authority figures, which he carried out at Yale University in the early 1960s. The study participants were willing to obey an authority figure who asked them to administer electric shocks to a stranger, even when they believed that the shocks were gradually increasing to levels that could have been lethal.

Systemic Discrimination Has a Deep Impact on the Psyche

Institutional mistreatment of an ethnic or racial group of people typically extends across many generations and is reinforced by the inculcation of racist systems of belief. A structure of incentives and rewards is offered to those members of the privileged group who uphold or “buy into” the racist ideologies, a strategy that has been dubbed “manufacturing consent”.

For example, the system of apartheid that was enforced in South Africa during most of the second half of the 20th Century was supported by massive propaganda that people with darker complexions were born inferior, and hence were meant to serve the white minority there. The hunger to exploit black labor led to a very strong sense of belonging among the dominant whites, and this collective solidarity was used to help build up an apparatus of repressive educational, financial, judicial, and political institutions in South Africa. Similar practices of radical mistreatment based on racism have occurred in other parts of the world, including India, Australia, New Zealand, South America, and the United States.

Such racial practices have profound impacts on the psychology of members of both groups, exploiter and exploited. For example, Mckeown and Mercer’s survey in Britain in 2010 found that Black men are over-represented in all diagnostic categories of mental disorder except personality disorders, most notably in the categories of psychosis and schizophrenia. They noted that in the UK, such research has mainly focused on the experiences of people of African heritage, but that similar anomalies have been noted in relation to certain other ethnic groups, including people of Irish heritage.

In the Indian subcontinent, caste is an ugly problem with a legacy as hard to uproot as that of racism in the Western countries. After more than a millennium, the caste-based outlook has been imbued into the cognitive apparatus of a very large part of society. The resulting behaviors and practices directed against members of lower castes, the *dalits* (a word that traces back to a Sanskrit term with literal meaning “the deprived and oppressed”)— such as untouchability, denial of access to public facilities and to temples, hate crimes, and honor killings— continue unabated. In fact, with the rise of Hindu fundamentalist (neo-fascist) rule in India five years ago under the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), these incidents of grotesque caste discrimination and violence have soared dramatically. Significantly, during those five years India’s world position in the happiness rankings published by the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network plummeted further, from a rank of #117 to #140 out of 156 countries.

Oppression, Violence, and Suicide

The most vulnerable segments of a population, such as women and poor people, are often those who suffer the worst cases of violence and mental health issues.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has found that “gender specific risk factors for common mental disorders that disproportionately affect women include gender based violence, socioeconomic disadvantage, low income and income inequality, low or subordinate social status and rank and unremitting responsibility for the care of others.” The high prevalence of sexual violence to which women are exposed, and the correspondingly high rate of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) following such violence, renders women the largest single group of people affected by this disorder. Unipolar depression— which is now the #2 cause of global disability bur-



Near harvest time in 2006 in the Indian state of Maharashtra, people in the village of Bhadumari gathered in the small mud house of Anil Kondba Shende and looked at his body as the local police investigated his suicide. The 31-year-old farmer had swallowed a bottle of pesticide, leaving behind a wife and two small sons. Anil, who owned only a 3½-acre patch of cotton and was already in debt, had to watch his crop fail three times that year—twice from drought and once from flooding.

Photo:
Fawzan Husain/ *New York Times* (Sep. 19, 2006)

Privatization versus People's Health and Sanity

den and is predicted to be #1 by 2030— is twice as common in women as in men.

Gender stereotypes are also one of the primary contributors to adolescent suicides. Depression, anxiety, and even somatic symptoms are more common among women than men because of imposed gender-based roles, gender bias, and oppression.

India currently has the world's highest number of youth suicides. According to National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data for the period 2011-15, there is an average of almost *one student suicide in India per hour*. India also accounts for 36.6% of suicides globally.

Suicide has surpassed maternal mortality as the leading cause of death among women and teenage girls in India aged 15-19. The National Mental Health Survey for 2015-16, conducted by the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS) in Bengaluru, under the purview of the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, reveals that 9.8 million Indian teenagers in the age group 13-17 suffer depression and other mental health disorders. Although India did adopt its first Mental Health Act in 2017, no visible impact has yet been recorded.

According to another report from the NCRB, 7,536 farmer suicides were reported in India in a single year, 2015. More than 23,000 farmers committed suicide in the state of Maharashtra alone between 2009 and 2016. Why? Ironically, because the pace of economic development has accelerated in countries such as India. Capitalist development is fitful, distorted, and lopsided: in India, it has aggrandized the major industries while devastating the environment and undermining lower-income strata, including farmers, basic wage laborers, minority communities, and small business owners. Tamma Carleton, a researcher at the Univ. of California at Berkeley, compared suicide and climate data and concluding that climate change in India may have “a strong influence” on suicides during growing season, triggering more than 59,000 suicides in 30 years.

the Human Development Survey (National Council of Applied Economic Research) for the period 2005-2012, 41.3% of India's poor remain poor, i.e., they are locked in the “poverty trap”. The cost of health care in India has been multiplying since the advent of neo-liberalism in the early 1990s and is more and more out of reach for more and more impoverished people. Consistent with a worldwide trend, the Indian government is striving to privatize leading institutions of society, not just health care institutions but also universities, the textile industry, telecommunications, the media conglomerates, and public transport.

These controlled neoliberal economies and their monopolized markets are operated by the owners of huge corporations. The owners actually comprise a very small part of the entire population, but their greed poses a direct threat to the people's welfare. Recently, to dramatize this point, U.S. Congresswoman and activist Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez quantified in vials of insulin the amount of taxpayer money that the Transdigm Group charges the government for a small airplane part. Transdigm, a Cleveland, Ohio-based aerospace contractor, had sold 149 three-inch non-vehicular clutch disks to the government for \$215,007, a profit of 4436% on the cost of making the part. As Ocasio-Cortez told the Transdigm chairman who was testifying in front of the House Oversight Committee, “I could have gotten over 1,500 people insulin for the cost of the margin for your price gouging for these vehicular disks alone.”

But the health care and pharmaceutical sectors themselves are now big businesses, subject to the same compulsion to seek out the highest profits. In just one decade (2003 to 2012), the top 11 global pharma firms generated net profits of nearly three quarters of a trillion dollars. Eli Lilly's antidepressant drug Prozac, a selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor (SSRI), used to be the biggest-selling pharmaceutical— until it was learned that it actually increases suicidal ideation and causes some users, especially adolescents, to kill themselves or others. Then Lilly repackaged and relabelled the exact same drug under the appealing new brand name Sarafem at a much higher price tai-

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Mental Health

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lored to target unsuspecting women seeking relief from premenstrual symptoms. Such “rebranding” of drugs is a lucrative tactic for the pharmaceutical firms. Another SSRI antidepressant, Paxil, was rebranded as the cure-all for shyness under the guise of treating social anxiety.

The high incidence of mental illness among homeless people is a well-known feature in virtually all countries now. But again, there are broader political and institutional factors underlying this phenomenon. In the U.S., for example, as part of President Kennedy’s New Frontier program, in 1963 the government enacted the Mental Retardation Facilities and Community Mental Health Centers Construction Act in a move to “deinstitutionalize” mental health care. The states were to build a network of neighborhood mental health centers providing community-based care, whereby patients could receive treatment while working and living at home rather than being confined to a state hospital. But only a small fraction of the planned centers were ever built, and none of them were fully funded, as the bill didn’t provide federal dollars for them. Some states used the legislation simply as an excuse to close expensive state mental health care hospitals and did nothing to take up the slack, initiating a whole new version of homelessness crisis in the streets of America: untreated mental illness. Today, the number of beds at state psychiatric hospitals in the U.S. is only about one-tenth the number in 1963.

What is To Be Done?

It is important to know that most of what the mainstream media report for us today is a controlled dose of catharsis, sublimity, awe, excitement, or impetus for expanding commodity fetishism. We would be going too far if we made a blanket condemnation of their news as untrue. On the other hand, the way we are challenged with a massive abundance of information— so much that we do not know what to do with such an overwhelming barrage— means that we would be wise to be skeptical about it.

We are supposed to be so entangled in our own crises that we must not rise to peep and even think about the crisis of another individual or community or people. But the insistent and heroic questions posed by Greta Thunberg, the climate change activist who is an autistic teenager from Sweden, remind us that a very large number of people on the planet are having to go through profound crises, and that the repercussions of those crises include a highly psychological aspect.

But how do we confront these problems when they seem to have moved beyond the control of existing institutions?

The solution must instead begin with some form of sustaining human bondings beyond transactional expectations. We could attempt to rebuild a sense of community, going back to as basic a level of community as needed. We must also learn to unlearn the information that we are being overfed. There is no immediate solution to the problem of failing mental health, but once we learn to strive in togetherness and to defeat the corporate propaganda that is destroying our ecosystems and hence our peace of mind, maybe we could start addressing the rest of the issues, unspooling the problems one by one.

Since mental health is not an isolated crisis, we must address the bigger picture, including issues such as racism, misogyny, hatred, genocide, deforestation, consumerism, commodity fetishism, violence, autocracy, dictatorship, greed, and fascism. The only way to answer human monstrosity is by defeating the policies that are anti-earth and anti-life. Those who are now in control of this system, and who have been manufacturing our consent in it, are isolated enough not to realize that when the last tree is cut down, and the last drop of water has dried up and the last ecosystem has perished, even the uber-rich and ultra-powerful would have nowhere left to go to. •

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New at Our Neighboring Schools

Najah Bazzy, RN, an adjunct faculty member at **Michigan State University's** Institute of International Health and an alumna of **Madonna University**, was named one of the 10 CNN Heroes of 2019, "Everyday People Doing Extraordinary Things to Change the World." Ms. Bazzy, who lives in Canton, MI, with her husband Allie Bazzy, is a revered health care consultant, humanitarian, and interfaith community leader. She heads Diversity Specialists, a group that trains health care personnel in cross-cultural understanding, and is the founder (1996) and CEO of the nonprofit Zaman International, which provides basic necessities, education, and job training to indigent people in metro Detroit, especially immigrant women and children. In Feb. 2005 as part of Curriculum Enrichment Day for Schoolcraft's Nursing Program, Bazzy spoke about the need for nurses to have cultural knowledge about their patient populations, including knowledge about Arab and Muslim beliefs and practices (see the article by Kathleen C. Fordyce, "Nursing Faculty Explore Cultural Implications", *International Agenda*, Oct. 2005).

Students taking selected sections of Market Research (Marketing 454) at the **University of Michigan-Dearborn** have been advising small- to mid-size retailers in Ghana on their potential for global e-commerce. Guided by their professor, mentors, and experienced multicultural business owners, the students have interfaced with a variety of Ghanaian entrepreneurs and prepared reports for them that evaluate the viability of "going global" with products such as African-dyed fabrics, vibrantly printed leather backpacks, and organic African hair and skincare products. The service-learning experience, piloted in Winter 2019 by Marketing professor Crystal Scott, is part of the Digital Futures Fellowship Program of the Detroit-based Virtual Global Consultant Group (VGC).

For two weeks last Fall, **Wayne State University** hosted a group of 11 students and faculty from Vitebsk State University in Belarus. The visitors explored the campus as well as Detroit, which is a sister city of Minsk, the Belarus capital; collaborated on projects with WSU students of Russian; and made presentations on Belarusian life and culture to a number of classes at WSU as well as at the Univ. of Michigan (Ann Arbor) and César Chávez Academy High School (a charter school in Southwest Detroit). Dzianis Biazozka, a law professor at Vitebsk State University, is a Visiting Scholar at WSU in 2019-20.

Twelve students in a class at **Wayne State University** last Fall created an *ofrenda* that was displayed as part of the *Día de los Muertos* (Day of the Dead) exhibit at the Detroit Institute of Arts. Their *ofrenda*, "Life and Death Along *La Frontera*", honored those who have died crossing the borders of the Americas. The course, "Community Engagement and Narrative through the Practice of *Ofrenda*", is taught by Alicia Marcelena Diaz of the WSU Ctr. for Chicano/Boricua Studies.

Last year, a team of students in the Media Communications program at **Lawrence Technological University** produced the video "Women Untold" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T5196ZW9s-g>), a half-hour documentary about three little-known women of color in STEM in the early and mid-1900s. The film is based on published articles by Sibrina Collins (Executive Dir. of LTU's Marburger STEM Center) about cancer researcher Jewel Plummer Cobb, leprosy researcher Alice Augusta Bell, and mathematician Evelyn Boyd Granville. Funding was provided by an LTU diversity grant from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute.

Among the notable books published last year by local faculty members or university presses:

- Mark A. Reid (Prof. of English and Film at the Univ. of Florida at Gainesville, where he teaches African Diasporic studies) was the editor for an essay collection, *African American Cinema through Black Lives Consciousness* (**Wayne State University** Press, 2019). The essays use critical race theory to discuss films that embrace contemporary issues of race, sexuality, class, and gender, such as "A Soldier's Story" (1984), "The Secret Life of Bees" (2008), and "Django Unchained" (2012).
- Mohammad Hassan Khalil (Prof. of Religious Studies, Adjunct Prof. of Law, and Dir. of the Muslim Studies Program at **Michigan State University**) was the editor for *Muslims and US Politics Today: A Defining Moment* (Ilex Foundation, 2019). These essays examine the historical background of Muslims in the U.S.; aspects of anti-Muslim politics and marginalization, as well as activism in defense of tolerance; and a rethinking of Muslim politics in its relation to Black American Islam and to progressive Islamic trends internationally.
- Christiane Gruber (Prof. of Islamic Art at the **University of Michigan**, Ann Arbor) has written *The Praiseworthy One: The Prophet Muhammad in Islamic Texts and Images* (Indiana Univ. Press, 2019). In the wake of controversies over printing or displaying images of Muhammad, her aim is to bring back into scholarly and public discussion the 'lost' history of imagining the Prophet in Islamic cultures. The book examines verbal and visual constructions of Muhammad's character and persona over the course of more than 1,000 years, correcting public misconceptions while restoring to Islam its rich artistic heritage.
- In *Italian Ecocinema: Beyond the Human* (Indiana University Press, 2019), Elena Past (Prof. of Italian, **Wayne State University**) examines five Italian films shot on location—"Red Desert" (1964), "The Wind Blows Round" (2005), "Gomorrhah" (2008), "The Four Times" (2010), and "Return to the Aeolian Islands" (2010)—to explore whether modern cinema is environmentally sustainable.

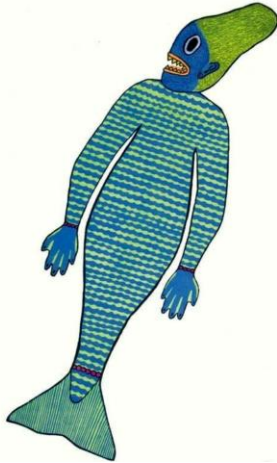
It's a Multicultural World— Right in Our Backyard!

See also pp. 14-15 for events relevant to the Schoolcraft College 2020 Focus, "Language and Communication Around the Globe".

Mar. 9, 2019 – Mar. 8, 2020: "Global Conversations: Art in Dialogue", an exhibit of contemporary works engaging with issues of world urgency: identity, migration, the digital revolution, and more. Toledo Museum of Art, 2445 Monroe St. For info, see <http://www.toledomuseum.org> or call 419-255-8000.

Nov. 12, 2019 – Mar. 15, 2020: "Detroit Collects: Selections of African American Art from Private Collections", an exhibit featuring works by Romare Bearden, Al Loving, Charles McGee, and Alison Saar. Detroit Institute of Arts, 5200 Woodward Ave., Detroit. For info, call 313-833-7900 or see <https://www.dia.org>.

Nov. 16, 2019 – May 10, 2020: "Reflections: An Ordinary Day", an exhibit of mid-century to contemporary Inuit prints, drawings, and sculptures that portray seemingly ordinary reflections of daily life along with daydreaming meditations. Univ. of Michigan Museum of Art, 525 South State St., Ann Arbor. For more info, see <http://www.umma.umich.edu> or call 734-764-0395.



Dec. 5, 2019 – Dec. 6, 2020: "Expanded Views II: Native American Art in Focus", the second installation in TMA's effort to foreground Native American art. Among other items on display here is a rotating selection of Navajo textile masterworks from the Denver Museum of Nature and Science. Toledo Museum of Art, 2445 Monroe St. For info, see <http://www.toledomuseum.org> or call 419-255-8000.

Dec. 14, 2019 – Aug 30, 2020: Bruegel's "The Wedding Dance" Revealed. Marking the 450th anniversary of the death of Dutch artist Pieter Bruegel, this exhibit celebrates his famous 1566 painting owned by the DIA. Detroit Institute of Arts, 5200 Woodward Ave., Detroit. For more info, see <https://www.dia.org> or call 313-833-7900.

Jan. 9 – Mar. 15, 2020: World premiere of "The Puppeteer", a play by Desirée York. Spanning five generations from the Harlem Renaissance to the present, the women from one African-American family struggle to overcome the social roles assigned to them. Detroit Repertory Theatre, 13103 Woodrow Wilson, Detroit. For info and tickets, call 313-868-1347 or e-mail DetRepTh@aol.com or visit the website <http://detroitreptheatre.com>.

Jan. 17-26, 2020: Shen Yun 2020. Reviving 5,000 years of Chinese civilization, this extravaganza includes classical,

Detroit Film Theatre

Among the films at the DFT this season, the following are set in the countries indicated. This venue is located at the John R. Street entrance to the Detroit Institute of Arts, 5200 Woodward Ave., Detroit. For info and tickets, see <https://www.dia.org/visit/detroit-film-theatre> or call 313-833-4005.

Jan. 17-19: "Varda by Agnès" (France, 2019)

Jan. 24-26: "63 Up" (UK, 2018)

Mar. 1: "The Tale of Princess Kaguya" (Japan, 2013)

Mar. 20-22: "Mr. Klein" (France, 1976)

Apr. 10-12: "Kind Hearts and Coronets" (UK, 1949)

Apr. 17: "The Wild Goose Lake" (China, 2019)

ethnic, and folk dance as well as orchestral accompaniment and soloists. Detroit Opera House, 1526 Broadway, Detroit. For information and tickets, call 844-647-4697 or visit the website <http://www.ShenYun.com/detroit>.

Jan. 17 – Apr. 3, 2020: "Halal Metropolis", a travelling series of exhibitions by artist Osman Khan, photographer Razi Jafri, and historian Sally Howell exploring the facts, fictions and imaginaries of the Muslim population(s) in Southeast Michigan. This particular installation highlights the role of food, fashion, and holiday celebrations. Stamelos Gallery Center, Univ. of Michigan Dearborn, 4901 Evergreen Rd., Dearborn. For more info, see <https://halalmetropolis.org>.

Jan. 18 – Apr. 12, 2020: "ONE EACH: Still Lifes by Pissarro, Cézanne, Manet & Friends", a one-gallery focus of 1860s still lifes by six French painters. Toledo Museum of Art, 2445 Monroe St. For info, see <http://www.toledomuseum.org> or call 419-255-8000.

Jan. 18 – Apr. 12, 2020: "Wonderfully Made: The Artis Collection of African American Art" exhibits prints, watercolors, and drawings by Henry Ossawa Tanner, Jacob Lawrence, Mary Lee Bendolph and others, all from the collection of Flint natives Anthony J. and Davida J. Artis. Flint Institute of Arts, 1120 E. Kearsley Street, Flint. For more info, call 810-234-1695 or see <https://www.flintarts.org>.

Jan. 25, 2020: India Fest 2020, a festival featuring Indian music and dance, food, clothes, and jewelry in celebration of India's Republic Day. Organized by the Michigan chapter of the India League of America (ILA). 10 am - 6 pm. Farmington Hills Manor, 23666 Orchard Lake Road, Farmington Hills. For more info, see <http://www.ilamichigan.org/Indiafest> or contact George T. Vannilam at 248-921-9941.

Jan. 26, 2020: National Geographic Live: “When Women Ruled the World”. Dr. Kara Cooney, Prof. of Egyptian Art and Architecture at UCLA, examines the power and influence of women rulers of ancient Egypt, including Cleopatra, Neferusobek, and Nefertiti. 3-6 pm. Macomb Center for the Performing Arts, 44575 Garfield Road, Clinton Twp. For information and tickets, call 586-286-2141 or see <http://www.macombcenter.com>.

Jan. 26 – Apr. 19, 2020: “Community”, an exhibit of art from the FIA collection by African Americans such as Romare Bearden, Chakaia Booker, Jacob Lawrence, Kara Walker, and many others. The works are in various mediums and explore themes related to community, including ideas of history and place, identity and representation, and social justice and self-expression. Flint Institute of Arts, 1120 E. Kearsley Street, Flint. For more info, call 810-234-1695 or see <https://www.flintarts.org>.

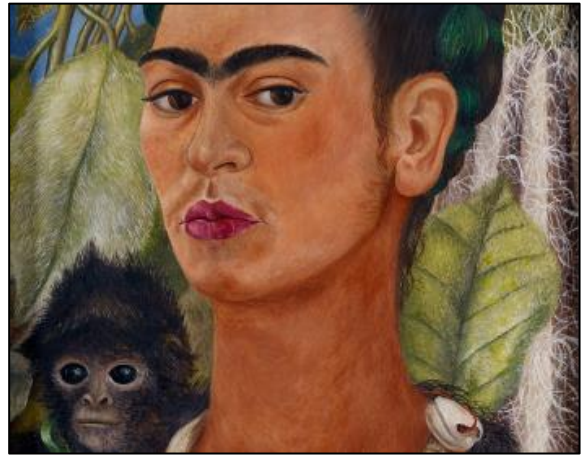
Jan. 28, 2020: Chinese New Year Celebration. An evening of traditional Chinese music and theater with the Shanghai Chinese Orchestra & the Zhejiang Shaoju Opera Theater. 7:30 pm. Orchestra Hall, Fisher Music Center, 3711 Woodward Ave., Detroit. For info and tickets, visit <http://www.detroitpublictheatre.org> or call the DSO Box Office at 313-576-5111 or send an e-mail message to info@detroitpublictheatre.org.

Jan. 28 – Apr. 15, 2020: “Queen: From the Collection of CCH Pounder”, an exhibit of sculptures, paintings, and mixed media works by Africans, African-Americans, and Diaspora artists. Drawn from the personal collection of Guyanese-American actress CCH Pounder, the works vary in style, but all celebrate black feminine beauty, identity, and power. Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History, 315 E. Warren Ave., Detroit. For more info, call 313-494-5800 or see <http://www.chwmuseum.org>.

Jan. 31, 2020: The Russian National Ballet performs “Swan Lake”, composed by Tchaikovsky in 1875-6 and still one of the most popular of all ballets. This company, founded in Moscow during the Perestroika era of the late 1980s, has invigorated the tradition of Russian Ballet with new developments in dance from around the world. 8 pm. Music Hall Center for the Performing Arts, Main Stage, 350 Madison Avenue, Detroit. For info and tickets, call 313-887-8500 or see <http://www.musichall.org>.

Feb. 1, 2020: The Russian National Ballet (see Jan. 31 listing) performs the classic fairy tale, “Sleeping Beauty”. 2 pm. Macomb Center for the Performing Arts, Main Stage, 44575 Garfield Road, Clinton Twp. For info and tickets, call 586-286-2141 or see <http://www.macombcenter.com>.

Feb. 4, 2020: “Books & Brews” discussion of the novel *A Place For Us* by Fatima Farheen Mirza. When an Indian-American family reunites for the eldest daughter’s wedding, we learn how each of them has tread between two cultures to find their place in the world. 7-9 pm. Registration required. Wagon Wheel Lounge, Northville District Library, 212 West Cady St., Northville. For more info and to register, see <https://northvillelibrary.org/calendar.html> or call 248-349-3020.



Feb. 8 – Sep. 27, 2020: “Guests of Honor: Frida Kahlo and Salvador Dalí”, an exhibit of three important works on loan to the DIA together with photos from the DIA’s collection. Detroit Institute of Arts, 5200 Woodward Ave., Detroit. For info, see <https://www.dia.org> or call 313-833-7900.

Feb. 15 – May 10, 2020: “Les Automatistes: Collective Expressions”, an exhibit of bold, expressive works created by the founders of Les Automatistes, a Montréal art movement inspired by French Surrealist writer André Breton. Art Gallery of Windsor, 401 Riverside Drive W., Windsor, ONT. For more info, see <https://www.agw.ca/exhibition/519> or call 519-977-0013.

Feb. 15 – Jul. 26, 2020: “From Bruegel to Rembrandt: Dutch and Flemish Prints and Drawings from 1550 to 1700”, an exhibit of more than 70 works on paper, including prints by Pieter Bruegel I, Hendrick Goltzius, and Rembrandt van Rijn, and drawings by Bartolomeus Breenbergh and Esias van de Velde. Detroit Institute of Arts, 5200 Woodward Ave., Detroit. For info, see <https://www.dia.org> or call 313-833-7900.

Feb. 20-23, 2020: Performance of “Yerma” (“Barren”), a play by Federico García Lorca, the tragic story of a rural Spanish woman suffocated by the pressure to have children. Lydia Mendelssohn Theatre, Univ. of Michigan, 911 N. University Ave., Ann Arbor. For more info and for tickets, see http://smt.d.umich.edu/performances_events/calendar.php or call 734-763-3333.

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Multicultural Calendar *continued from page 45*

Feb. 21 and 28, 2020: “Building Bridges Through Music”, a free concert by the National Arab Orchestra featuring the NAO’s Takht Ensemble, students from the Dearborn Public Schools, and students in the NAO’s mentorship program. 8-10 pm. Fordson High School, 13800 Ford Rd., Dearborn.

Feb. 29 – Mar. 1, 2020: Performance of “Gianni Schicchi” and a sequel, “Buoso’s Ghost”. The first work, by Puccini, is considered one of the funniest operas of all time. The wealthy Florentine Buoso Donati has just died, yet all that his greedy relatives can think about is their neglect in his will. Featuring the Michigan Opera Theatre Studio Artists. Macomb Center for the Performing Arts, 44575 Garfield Road, Clinton Twp. For info and tickets, call 313-237-7464 or see <http://www.motopera.org>.

Mar. 7, 2020: “Drum TAO – 2020”, the latest production from acclaimed percussion artists TAO, showcasing the ancient art of Japanese drumming along with contemporary costumes, precise choreography, and innovative visuals. Stranahan Theater, 4645 Heatherdowns Boulevard, Toledo. For information and tickets, call 419-381-8851 or send an e-mail message to info@americantheatreguild.org or visit the website <http://theaterleague.com/toledo>.

Mar. 8 – Jul. 26, 2020: “Golden Needles: Embroidery Arts from Korea”, an exhibit co-organized with the Seoul Museum of Craft Art,

displays stunning examples of embroidery and patchwork by anonymous women artists whose creativity triumphed over the patriarchal



conventions of Joseon society. Cleveland Museum of Art, 11150 East Boulevard. For more information, see <http://www.clevelandart.org> or call 216-421-7350.

Mar. 9 – Apr. 26, 2020: “Global Conversations: Art in Dialogue” exhibits dozens of contemporary works of art, many from the TMA’s permanent collection and many newly acquired, that engage with urgent world issues such as identity, migration, and the digital revolution. Toledo Museum of Art, 2445 Monroe St. For info, see <http://www.toledomuseum.org> or call 419-255-8000.

Mar. 11, 2020: “She’s Gone Missing”. Heather Bruegl, a member of the Oneida nation of Wisconsin, discusses the surge in missing and murdered indigenous women, a tragedy little-known outside Indian Country. 7-9 pm. Registration required. Wagon Wheel Lounge, Northville District Library, 212 West Cady St., Northville. For more info and to register, see <https://northvillelibrary.org/calendar.html> or call 248-349-3020.

Mar. 20 – Apr. 12, 2020: World Premiere of the play “Arabic to English” (see box on page 15).

Mar. 21, 2020: Learn the history of Detroit’s Irish American community on a tour of the Gaelic League and the Irish American Club of Detroit, organized by the Detroit Historical Society. 12 - 1:30 pm (following the St. Patrick’s Day Parade). For more info and tickets, see <https://detroithistorical.org> or contact Bree Boettner by phone 313-833-1801 or e-mail breeb@detroithistorical.org.

Mar. 21, 2020: Free Annual Gala Concert by the National Arab Orchestra, celebrating its 10th anniversary with surprise vocal performances, new collaborations, and musical premieres. 8-10 pm. Michael A. Guido Theater, Ford Community & Performing Arts Center, 15801 Michigan Ave., Dearborn.

Mar. 26, 2020: 19th annual Multicultural Fair, a vibrant celebration of the international cultures on our campus. 10 am – 3 pm. DiPonio Room, VisTaTech Center, Schoolcraft College, 18600 Haggerty Road, Livonia. For more info, contact Helen Ditouras at hditoura@schoolcraft.edu.

Mar. 26-29, 2020: “Die Fledermaus” (“The Bat”), Johann Strauss II’s 1874 light comic operetta set to lush Viennese waltzes. A practical joke taken too far becomes the reason for a hilarious comeuppance. Lydia Mendelssohn Theatre, Univ. of Michigan, 911 N. University Ave., Ann Arbor. For more information and for tickets, visit the website http://smt.d.umich.edu/performances_events/calendar.php or call 734-763-3333.

Mar. 27, 2020: Annual World Music Concert by OU’s World Music Ensembles performing music from West Africa, the Caribbean, and South America. 8-10 pm, Varner Hall, Oakland Univ., 371 Varner Drive, Rochester. For more info and tickets, see <https://www.oakland.edu/smt.d> or e-mail smt.d@oakland.edu.

Mar. 27 – Apr. 5, 2020: “Tartuffe”, Molière’s 1664 comedic play about a religious hypocrite and his credulous follower, translated from French into English verse by Richard Wilbur. Quirk Theatre, Eastern Michigan Univ., Ypsilanti. For more info and tickets, see <https://www.emich.edu/cm.ta> or call 734-487-3130.

Mar. 28, 2020: Learn about the Greek American community on a tour of the Hellenic Museum of Michigan, organized by the



Detroit Historical Society. 10 - 11:30 am. For more info and for tickets, see <https://detroithistorical.org> or contact Bree Boettner at 313-833-1801 or e-mail breeb@detroithistorical.org.

April 2020: 16th annual Italian Film Festival. Free screenings of contemporary Italian comedies, dramas, documentaries, and short films, all with English subtitles, scheduled at venues around Michigan, including Apr. 1-5 at the Detroit Film Theatre (Detroit Institute of Arts). For more info, see <http://italianfilmfests.org/detroit.html>.

Apr. 16 – Jun. 7, 2020: “Unboxing”, an installation by New Red Order, an indigenous art collective led by Adam Khalil (Ojibwe), Zack Khalil (Ojibwe), and Jackson Polys (Tlingit). Working with an interdisciplinary network of collaborators, they create video, performance, and installation works that use humor, absurdity, and documentary strategies to confront settler colonial tendencies and obstacles to indigenous growth and agency. Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit, 4454 Woodward Ave., Detroit. For more info, call 313-832-6622 or e-mail info@mocadetroit.org or see <https://mocadetroit.org>.

Apr. 16 – Jun. 7, 2020: “Black Universe”, an exhibit that surveys the figurative and abstract paintings of accomplished African-American artist Peter Williams. The works intertwine art historical references, allegories, current events, and personal life experiences to address oppressive social structures and discrimination through grotesque figures, vibrant compositions, and symbolic imagery. Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit, 4454 Woodward Ave., Detroit. For more info, call 313-832-6622 or e-mail info@mocadetroit.org or see <https://mocadetroit.org>.

Apr. 18, 2020: 40th annual Dance Recital of the Polish National Alliance Centennial Dancers Lodge 53, a colorfully costumed children’s Polish folkdance ensemble from Wayne, Oakland, and Livingston Counties. 1 – 2:30 pm. Village Theater, 50400 Cherry Hill Road, Canton. For more info and tickets, call 734-394-5300 or see www.cantonvillagetheater.org.

Apr. 21-26, 2020: Performance of Alice Walker’s *The Color Purple*, the story of a young Black woman’s journey to love and triumph in the American South. This staging includes a soul-raising, award-winning score of jazz, gospel, ragtime, and blues. Main Stage, Music Hall Center for the Performing Arts, 350 Madison Avenue, Detroit. For info and tickets, call 313-887-8500 or see <http://www.musicall.org>.

May 8-17, 2020: Cinetopia International Film Festival. Over 50 films shown at venues in Detroit and Ann Arbor. For info and tickets, see <http://www.cinetopiafestival.org> or call 734-668-8397 or e-mail info@cinetopiafestival.org.

May 16, 2020: “Splendor of the East”, an annual public celebration of Asian Pacific Heritage Month. A black-tie Asian fusion dinner in the ballroom is followed by a “Michigan Got Talent” show at the theater, and capped by an afterglow party back at the ballroom. Organized by the Michigan chapter of the Council of Asian Pacific Americans (CAPA). 4:30 – 10:30 pm. Ford Community & Performing Arts Center, 15801 Michigan Ave., Dearborn. For more info, see <http://capa-mi.org>.

May 24 – Aug. 23, 2020: “Picasso and Paper”, an exhibit featuring nearly 300 works by Picasso spanning his entire career: watercolors, prints, pastels, sketches, photographs, collages, paper sculptures, and more, accompanied by closely related paintings and sculptures to provide deeper context. Cleveland Museum of Art, 11150 East Boulevard. For info, see <http://www.clevelandart.org> or call 216-421-7350.

May 30, 2020: “Sarovar: An Afternoon of Carnatic Music”, a grand classical concert by distinguished artists from India. Sponsored by the Great Lakes Aradhana Committee. 4-6 pm. Varner Hall, Oakland Univ., 371 Varner Drive, Rochester. For more info and tickets, see <https://www.oakland.edu/smtd> or e-mail smtd@oakland.edu.

Jun. – Aug. 2020: “Halal Metropolis” (see entry for Jan. 17 – Apr. 3). Stamps Gallery, Univ. of Michigan, 201 S. Division St., Ann Arbor.



Jun. 21 – Sep. 27, 2020: “Van Gogh in America”, featuring about 65 of his paintings and works on paper from collections around the world. This is the first exhibit exploring the efforts made by early promoters of modernism in the U.S. to introduce Van Gogh into American consciousness. Detroit Institute of Arts, 5200 Woodward Ave., Detroit. For info, see <https://www.dia.org> or call 313-833-7900.

Jun. 26 – Jul. 19, 2020: World premiere of the play “God Kinda Looks Like Tupac” by Emilio Rodriguez. When a young Black high school student creates an unconventional portrait of God for a student art exhibition, her white and Latina teachers ponder whether to encourage her provocative approach. Theatre NOVA, 410 W. Huron Street, Ann Arbor. For more info and tickets, see <https://www.theatrenova.org> or call 734-635-8450.

Jul. 8-14 2020: 28th annual Concert of Colors, metro Detroit’s free, five-day world music festival accompanied by ethnic food and merchandise, musician-led workshops, a Forum on Community, Culture & Race, and a large children’s tent. Organized by the Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS) and partners. Midtown Detroit. For more information, call 313-582-2266 or visit the website <http://concertofcolors.com>.

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Northville Library Films

One Monday night each month, the Northville District Library presents a free film in a foreign language with English subtitles. The screenings are at 6:30 pm at 212 West Cady St., Northville. For more info, see <https://northvillelibrary.org> or call 248-349-3020.

Jan. 27, 2020: “The Silent Revolution” (German)
Feb. 24, 2020: “Return of the Hero” (French)
Mar. 23, Apr. 27, May 18, Jun. 22, Jul. 27, Aug. 24:
 to be announced.

University Musical Society

International music is featured in the following selections from the UMS season, scheduled at various venues in Ann Arbor. For info and tickets, see <http://www.ums.org> or call 734-764-2538.

Feb. 14, 2020: Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán
 (Mexican *marachi*)
Feb. 16, 2020: Angélique Kidjo’s *Remain in Light*
 (Talking Heads meets Afrobeat)
Apr. 9, 2020: Zakir Hussain (Indian *tabla*).

Spring/Summer Ethnic Festivals in Southeastern Michigan

Last weekend in March: Dance for Mother Earth PowWow. Skyline High School, Ann Arbor. <http://www.umich.edu/~powwow>.

April 14, 2019: Greek Independence Day Parade. Monroe Street, Greektown, Detroit. <http://www.greekparades.com>.

Second or third weekend in April: Dance Recital of the Polish National Alliance Centennial Dancers Lodge 53, Village Theater, Canton. <https://pnacentennialdancers.wordpress.com>.

Memorial Day weekend: Saint Mary’s Polish Country Fair. Saint Mary’s Preparatory School, Orchard Lake campus. <http://www.stmaryspolishcountryfair.com>.

Memorial Day weekend: Ya’ssoo Greek Festival. St. George Greek Orthodox Church, Bloomfield Hills. <https://www.yassogreekfestival.com>

First Saturday in June: Romanian American Heritage Festival. Saints Peter & Paul Romanian Orthodox Church, Dearborn Heights. <http://spproc.org/festival>.

First Saturday in June: African American Downtown Festival. East Ann Street & North Fourth Avenue, Ann Arbor. <http://a2festival.org>.

Second weekend in June: Ya’ssoo Greek Festival. Saint Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church, Ann Arbor. <http://www.annarborgreekfestival.org>.

Mid-June: Dearborn Arab International Festival. Warren Avenue between Schaefer and Wyoming Avenues, Dearborn. <http://www.americanarab.com>.

Mid-June: Motor City Irish Fest. Greenmead Historical Park, Livonia. <https://motorcityirishfest.com>.

Mid-June: Carrousel of the Nations multicultural festival. Riverfront Festival Plaza, downtown Windsor, Ontario. <http://www.carrouselofnations.ca>.

Late June: St. Stan’s Polish Festival. St. Stan’s Athletic Club, Bay City. <https://www.facebook.com/ststansacpolishfestival>.

Second weekend in July: American-Polish Festival. Sterling Heights High School. <http://www.americanpolishfestival.com>.

Mid-July: Saline Celtic Festival. Mill Pond Park, W. Bennett Street, Saline. <http://www.salineceltic.org>.

Last weekend in July: Arab and Chaldean Festival. Hart Plaza, downtown Detroit. <http://www.arabandchaldeanfestival.com>.

Late July or early August: Highland Games Scottish Festival. Greenmead Historical Park, Livonia. <http://www.highlandgames.com>.

Early August: Detroit Caribbean Cultural Festival. New Center Park, 2998 W. Grand Blvd., Detroit. <http://www.myccco.org>.

Early August: St. Andrews Society of Detroit Highland Games (Scottish Heritage Festival). Greenmead Historical Park, Livonia. <http://www.highlandgames.com>.

Mid-August: African World Festival. Museum of African American History, Detroit. <http://thewright.org/african-world-festival>.

Mid-August: Assumption GreekFest. Assumption Greek Orthodox Church, St. Clair Shores. <http://assumptionfestival.com>.

Mid-August: AQL India Day. Suburban Collection Showplace, 46100 Grand River Avenue, Novi. <http://www.ilamichigan.org/events>.

Third weekend of August: JAM3A Arab American Outdoor Music and Arts Festival. Arab American National Museum, Dearborn. <https://www.jam3a.org>.

Late August: Pow Wow and Health Fair. Romanowski Park, southwest Detroit. <http://www.aihfs.org>.

Early September: Hispanic Heritage Festival. WCCCD Downtown Campus, Detroit. <http://www.wccd.edu/about/hispanic%20festival.htm>.

Second or third weekend in September: Ann Arbor Russian Festival, St. Vladimir Russian Orthodox Church, Dexter. <http://www.annarborryussianfestival.org>.