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## **Juegos de Educación: Collection of Student-Centered Spanish Language Activities in a Web Based Format**

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ABSTRACT

JUEGOS DE EDUCACIÓN

COLLECTION OF STUDENT-CENTERED SPANISH LANGUAGE ACTIVITIES  
IN A WEB BASED FORMAT

by

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Geoff W. Bullis

Jenny R. Smith

July 1999

This project incorporates the use of games and activities as supplemental resources with today's technology enhanced environment. It was designed to create an easily accessible resource for teachers of Spanish language instruction. Our project focused on creating a Web site on the Internet which included several student-centered activities. The development of the project included research of similar Web sites, literature regarding best teaching practices and methods, Gardner's multiple intelligences, specifically bodily/kinesthetic intelligence, and a teacher questionnaire focusing on the need for the project. Through the research and questionnaire it was determined that a dearth of Web-based resources are available to most teachers. The main beneficiary of the project is the teacher of Spanish language. It was created to enable teachers easy access to student-centered activities and to create a forum for teachers to share their ideas and comments.

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# CHAPTER I

## BACKGROUND OF PROJECT

### Introduction

Language learning is a complex and multifaceted process. Much like Music or Art, language is an expression of self and society. Also similar to those two mediums it adopts an almost organic nature.

From a child's first "mama" to Joyce's *Ulysses*, the process of language learning and acquisition is an ever-changing and ever-expanding arc. Because of the mutable nature of language, linguists have long proposed "using a cautious, enlightened, and eclectic approach..." (Brown, 1994, p. 15), to the teaching of foreign languages.

With all the variables that enter into the acquisition of a second language it is so important to remember that no one method of instruction is going to help students learn a foreign language. In some cases depending on the profundity of the lesson, it might be more useful to work with rote memorization of vocabulary, or direct lecture by the instructor. While in other cases it may be more suitable to perform a skit or play an interactive game.

In order to be successful then, Rivers stated, "teachers should not be looking for the one best method for teaching languages but rather the most appropriate approach design of materials or set of procedures in a particular case...." Furthermore, educators, "...need to be flexible, with a repertoire of techniques they can employ as circumstances dictate..." (Rivers, 1987, p. 6).

Having spent an entire year interning and observing several schools, we have had the opportunity to witness various Spanish language classrooms in action. The conclusion is that many of these classrooms lack the selection of games and activities needed to motivate and involve the students in the learning process. This is not a reflection of the teacher's knowledge of content or pedagogical ability, but rather a reflection of few creative activities. "Research shows that the average foreign language classroom lacks productivity and creativity," (Legutke, Thomas 1991, p. 8). Thus, the creation of a Web based collection of Spanish language activities would dramatically expand those creative activities available to the foreign language teacher.

### Need

One of the best methods to acquire knowledge is through physical interaction, movement and communication, (Gardner, 1983). Wright, Betteridge, and Buckby (1984) state,

Learning a new language is hard work. The students need to make an effort to understand, to repeat accurately, to manipulate newly understood language and to use the whole range of known language in conversation or written composition. Effort is required at every moment and must be maintained over a long period of time. Games help and encourage many learners to sustain their interests and work. (p. 1).

Games and activities also help the teacher to make new information useful and meaningful. "Many games cause as much density of practice as more conventional drill exercises; some do not. What matters, however, is the quality of practice," (Wright, Betteridge, & Buckby 1984, p. 1). We believe drill

exercises are important, but think many games and activities provide the repetition needed in language comprehension in a much more meaningful and entertaining manner. Learners must react to the material! If they respond with any type of emotion other than boredom, the material is definitely meaningful to them. Therefore, the content will be better remembered. Furthermore, by lowering a student's inhibitions through the use of games and activities, you help to encourage them to take risks with the language that they ordinarily would not, therefore the language learning is enhanced. Through our observations, we noted that when group games and activities were incorporated into the lesson, all students engaged in the activity. This demonstrated that there is real motivation for student participation when activities and games are used.

The motivation or need for this project involves the desire to easily access several student-centered learning activities that will augment student learning in the Spanish language. With an ever-increasing rate of technology enhanced learning and the fact that the majority of teachers have access to the World Wide Web, we thought it quite appropriate to base this project on the creation of a Web site to be used as a creative resource tool for teachers of the Spanish language.

According to Scinicariello (1997):

The dream, universal access to technology is already being realized... telephone and cable companies are racing to wire neighborhoods with fiber-optic cable in order to become network providers. Most colleges and universities have or are constructing campus-wide networks with Internet access; federal, state, and local government agencies are providing similar

access to public schools. Community centers and libraries offer access to those who cannot or will not have access from the home.

Many of us already spend time in this new digital environment. We use our computers to find and retrieve information in a variety of formats without being consciously aware of the location of that information to individuals and groups through electronic mail, discussion groups and other Internet resources...we participate in International meetings from the comfort of our own homes. (p. 187)

Another need for creating this Web based resource is that the Internet is truly accessible by teachers and is more efficient than researching textbooks. For example, a study done by Macdonald & Rogers-Gordon (1984) "...found that while there are many innovative textbooks written by proponents of student-centered learning, language teachers usually do not have the time to look through them all to try to find an activity appropriate for a specific lesson." (p. iii)

For this reason, a Web site full of activities is viable. It would be accessible for all teachers at school, generally right inside their classroom. By means of classroom observations and questionnaires, information was gathered that lead the authors to believe that a Web site would definitely be taken advantage of by Spanish teachers. In addition, teachers who access this site will be able to interact with other teachers, provide feedback, and contribute to its growth and efficacy. This open, free-sharing of ideas amongst teachers would not be available in a traditional text-based resource.

## Purpose of the Project

This project was developed to create easily accessible student-centered activities, in a Web-based format, with special consideration given to Gardner's Multiple Intelligence Theory. In addition, it is designed to provide teachers with a means of sharing information and ideas.

## Key Concepts and Terminology

Student-centered activities: activities that focus on student participation and involvement in the classroom, in which the student has a stake in the lesson.

Best Practices: teaching practices and or methods that are considered to be the most effective.

Search Engine: a program designed specifically to aid in the locating of related Web-sites on the Internet. Used in conjunction with a Web-browser.

IBM Compatible/Apple MacIntosh: two separate computer operating systems, that are configured differently.

The following definitions are taken directly from the *Internet Guide for Students and Writers*; (Harnack & Kleppinger, 1997)

Internet: a vast network of computers offering many types of services, including e-mail and access to the World Wide Web. As a "network of networks", the Internet links computers around the world.

Internet Service Provider: a person or company providing access to the Internet.

On-line: a network; on the Internet.

Browser: a World Wide Web program for navigating the Internet. Most browsers display graphics and formatted pages and let you click on hyperlinks to "jump"

from one Web page to another. Widely used graphic browsers include Netscape Navigator and Internet Explorer.

Download: to transfer information electronically from one computer to another, as when you move a program from an archive to your computer.

Homepage: usually the first page you see when you access a particular Web site, a homepage has hypertext links to other pages on the same server or to the other Web servers. Both organizations and individuals can have their own homepages.

Hyperlink: a connection between two places on the Web. Hyperlinks are represented onscreen by highlighted icons or text. A Hyperlink makes your browser jump from one place to another.

Surf: to navigate the Internet.

World Wide Web: a global Internet service connecting hypertext data and resources. Using a browser, you can move quickly from one Web site to another in search of information, graphics, and data.

### Limitations

This project was created as a resource for the instruction and enhancement of the Spanish language, as well as a forum for Spanish teachers to share ideas. It was not designed to be used as an everyday resource, but rather as a supplement of a complete Spanish curriculum. It should also be noted that the activities within this resource alone are not sufficient for the acquisition of Spanish. Furthermore, in order to utilize this resource, one must

have access to the Internet, as well as, some knowledge of how to “surf the Web.”

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## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

#### Examination of Web Based Resource

As mentioned before, we are seeing an ever-increasing rate of technology enhanced learning. "The benefits of computer networks are so extensive that their popularity and widespread use are increasing at extraordinary and almost incomprehensible rates." (Eanes, 1997, p. 551) According to Cerf (1997) the number of host computers on the Internet increased from 200 to 5,000,000 in the 12 years from 1983 to 1995. This figure doubled again, to between 10 and 15 million in less than a year. Maddux (1996) states that if this growth trend continues, the number of hosts will reach upwards of 101 million by the year 2000. "By the end of the 1998-99 school year, probably more than 95 percent of public schools will have Internet access," (Hawkes, 1999, p. 46).

While many people feel that the Web has the potential to revolutionize education (Maddux, Johnson, 1997), the majority of the studies and literature have been written from the perspective of using the Internet simply as an informational tool rather than as an instructional tool. Some authors, such as Guglielmo Trentin (1999) state that while the Web is used mostly as a type of electronic library it can also be used as a "...sort of meeting point for people with similar interests, be they professional, educational, or simply personal," (Trentin, 1999, p. 15).

While there has been much debate regarding the role of the Internet in education, most of what has been written deals with using the Internet as a tool for teaching students instead of as a tool for teachers. There has been previous literature geared toward using the Internet as a professional development tool for teachers. Several studies describe the dialogue between teachers sharing ideas on-line as reflective and revealing at many levels, (Riel, 1992; Ruopp, Pfister, Drayton, & Gal, 1993). Romiszowski and Ravitz (1997) and Hawkes (1999) agree that many more studies are needed regarding this because the current literature is largely anecdotal.

There are several Web sites dedicated to the learning of Spanish (Erichsen, 1999; Spanish Learning Resources, 1999). There are also many sites that act as a place for a community of teachers to get together and chat and share ideas (Silverman, 1997). Web sites that contain whole lesson plans and/or thematic units are also readily available (Eichler 1999), but there seems to be little or no precedence for a Web site completely made up of student-centered teaching activities. Only one site containing activities was found and it is geared toward Elementary School students (Shivers, 1997). The authors would like to recognize that there may be Web sites we did not discover.

#### Examination of Effective Teaching Practices

From research on biological and anthropological evidence, Howard Gardner identified seven Multiple-Intelligences/Learning Styles: verbal/ linguistic, logical/ mathematical, visual/ spatial, body/ kinesthetic, musical/ rhythmic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. (Gardner, 1983) For instance, Gardner

believes that each individual has their own style of learning and through the identified style the amount of learning reaches its optimum level. The multiple intelligence that the authors are focusing on is body/kinesthetic. Gardner (1983) states,

Characteristic of such an intelligence is the ability to use one's body in highly differentiated and skilled ways, for expressive as well as goal-directed purposes... Characteristic as well is the capacity to work skillfully with objects, both those that involve the fine motor movements of one's fingers and hands and those that exploit gross motor movements of the body. (p. 206)

Asher (1982) suggests,

...that as normal children progress from grade to grade, there is less and less utilization of the kinesthetic sensory system. There is less physical action and increased learning through reading and writing. This may be a serious mistake especially for...acquiring a second language...it may be...because the instruction depends on the senses of vision and audition to the exclusion of the kinesthetic system. (Forward)

This supports the idea that games and activities, one of the most effective teaching practices, are ideal for acquiring a second language. Due to the enjoyment of the games, students tend to focus on the game itself and not the language skill being learned per se, (Helgesen, 1987). Students of a foreign language involve their whole personalities when they participate in class activities. They do this by writing, singing, dancing, talking and by using body movements. "There are three elements that generate high student involvement and interest. They are (1) continual and fast-moving action, (2) surprises in

unexpected novel commands...and (3) students are aware that the second language is accessible to them." (Asher, 1982, p. 32) These three elements help realize the acquisition of a second language, and for a student, are the keys to success. Daniel Crookhall and Rebecca Oxford (1990) suggest that one can only learn when they *do* something. This "doing" is what games and activities are actively promoting.

Ineffective teaching methods increase students' anxiety level. "Foreign language courses have been found more anxiety-inducing than any other course in a students program of study," (Bailey, Daley, & Onwuegbuzie, 1999, p. 63). According to Douglas Brown's (1994, p. 130) "Ten Commandments' For Good Language Learning" the first thing a teacher should do is to lower the students' inhibitions. By inhibitions we are referring to the fear of making a mistake at something they are not very good at. A teacher can effectively lower a student's inhibitions by playing "...guessing games...communication games and [using] plenty of group work..." (Brown, 1994, p. 130). Brown also encourages teachers to "do role playing [and] sing songs," and above all else laugh with their students. Marc Helgesen (1987) states,

...the very structure of games provides an opportunity for learners to practice vocabulary, grammar, specific language functions, and other language art skills. But it is the fact that the learners are using these features of language with a purpose that makes game playing worthwhile. (p. 211)

Part of the essence of student-centered activities is the idea of group interaction. The benefits of this are numerous. Long and Portier (1985) list: "(1)

increasing its quantity of language practice opportunity; (2) improving the quality of student talk; (3) creating a positive affective climate in the classroom; (4) individualizing instruction; and (5) increasing student motivation," (p. 207-8).

Although "collaborative activity...should be the norm *from* the beginning of language study..." (Rivers, 1987, p. 4), this very often is not the case. Frequently students of foreign language are "turned off" to the learning process because of the "failure of the teacher to be aware of and apply...[these] principles, which make language learning more relevant and rewarding," (Macdonald & Rogers-Gordon, 1984, p. vii). Another guiding principle used throughout the formation of this project is the idea that "learning is most effective when it develops from the interests and motivations of the student...students retain a foreign language more successfully when they involve themselves in the lesson," (Macdonald & Rogers-Gordon, 1984, p. iii). Very often the students struggle to learn foreign languages because it is a boring, frustrating process and seldom seems to have any relevancy to the students' lives.

## CHAPTER III

### PROCEDURES

The basic procedures incorporated by the project team include, review of related literature, field observations, questionnaire survey, researched teaching practices, and the creation of a Web site. The general outline of the project and the review of literature are described in chapters one and two, respectively. In this chapter the field observations, questionnaire survey, the process of collecting various activities, and the procedures of the production of the Web site will be discussed. In fulfilling the Masters team project requirements, the authors will be discussing separate methodologies and procedures used in compiling project information.

In the beginning stages of the creation of this project several research methods were established. For the purpose of obtaining valid and up to date information, supporting the reasons for the actualization of the project, a blind questionnaire survey (Appendix A), was designed and issued to several Spanish teachers. The manner in which these surveys were issued was varied. A few of the surveys were mailed out, a few were hand delivered and collected and several were filled-out over the telephone. The demographics of our survey subjects are varied as well, (e.g., teaching experience, age, and residency). Teaching experience ranges from teachers about to begin their career, to teachers who have eleven or more years of experience. The age range of our subjects is between twenty-four years to forty-six years. The residency of the subjects is primarily in the eastern part of a Pacific Northwestern state, although

a few teachers who participated in the survey reside in the Western part of the same state.

The second stage involved collecting anecdotal data through observation and actual teaching instruction that once again supported the project. As both authors assumed intern roles through the Masters program, each had the opportunity to observe and teach. Thus, the locations for doing observations were already selected for us. Three different schools were observed, two high schools and one junior high school. All three are located in the eastern part of a Pacific Northwestern state.

Observations and teaching experience, per Jenny Smith, took place at the High School level in a Spanish classroom offering, beginning classes as well as intermediate and advanced classes. During this time, teaching practices, use of games and activities, current supplemental resources and use of technology as a resource were observed and noted. Throughout this process, all observations and activities were discussed with the co-author, Geoff Bullis, with the intent to facilitate the writing process.

The third stage in the creation of this project was to look at previous research that had been done in this field in order to validate the project as well as determine what is the most effective method of learning a foreign language.

By perusing several books, collections of studies, and journals, it was determined that the idea of student-centered activities, as a method for learning a foreign language, was highly regarded in the academic world.

The fourth stage involved the investigation of the availability of other Web-based Spanish resources. Using the search engine *Netscape Search*® on *Netscape Communicator 4.5*® and typing the keywords "Spanish" and "Spanish teaching resources" as well as the search engine *Lycos*® on the browser *Internet Explorer 4.0*® and typing the words "Spanish activities," "Spanish teaching activities," and "Spanish teacher activities," the author, Geoff Bullis, found very little regarding sites designed specifically for teachers. The sites were all designed either to provide forums for teachers to gather online, full lesson plans, and/or sites specifically designed to help students learn a foreign language. While conducting this search we were unable to locate any sites dedicated solely to student-centered activities in Spanish at the secondary level.

After establishing activities to be an innovative, fun, and practical way to teach foreign language, the collection of activities that would provide the varied outlook we hoped to achieve began. Many of these activities were our own inventions, others were common games that have been used for years, while still others were gleaned from various sources and are noted as such.

First, we wrote out all the games we knew, plus we added games from several books. Next, we focused only on games and eliminated any activities that did not meet this game-like criteria, however, we did use some activities and simply invented a game format for them. We then categorized the games into four subsets: (1) Games of Listening, (2) Games of Speaking/Listening, (3) Games of Speaking/Reading, and (4) Games of Writing. We felt this created a

more diverse and eclectic group of games for inclusion on the Web site. Jenny and I then shared our thoughts and concerns with regards to the games that remained. Finally, we eliminated all but 20 of what we considered to be the "best of the best."

The final stage in the creation of this project was to construct our Web site. With the help of Peter Phillips, Technology teacher/Web designer at Entiat School District, we began the building process. The first step was to go surfing the Internet for various Web sites to see how they were designed. This process was very random and was done only to get a broad perspective on Web-design. Using *Clarisworks 3.0*® on an IBM® compatible machine we simply inputted our games onto the Web site in a text only format. Once the text version was completed we went back in to the site and downloaded various images to give our Web site a more aesthetically pleasing, user-friendly, appearance.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

Results of the teacher questionnaire were in fact in support of the project. The authors of this project received 100 percent return rate. It is interesting to note that from those returned surveys, 100 percent of them, scored games and activities as a four or five, with five being the most effective teaching method. Also, 93 percent of the teachers surveyed, regardless of amount of teaching experience or age, stated they would indeed access a Web site containing creative supplemental Spanish activities to aide already existing teaching materials. Another result is the relative relationship between the amount of teaching experience one has to the amount of supplemental games and activities one feels they need. Our questionnaire determined that 100 percent of teachers with only one to three years of experience did not feel they had an ample amount of supplemental resources, and in fact would access a Web site containing those resources.

The significance of this project is the actual Web site itself. The results of the Web site can be found in Appendix B, as well as, the Web site;

*<http://www.juegosdeeducacion@cwu.edu>*

We chose this style of format because our study and research determined that technology is more than readily available to almost all teachers nation-wide and that a lack of resources of this type is available.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMENDATIONS

In summary, the authors researched, by different methodologies the need for and access to effective teaching practices in a foreign language, specifically Spanish. The focus on the Spanish language was selected by the authors, due to their love for the language and the fact that it is their primary content area.

The project incorporates numerous student-centered games and activities that utilize the multiple intelligences that are most appropriate for teaching and learning a foreign language. The format used in developing the project is a Web site located on the World Wide Web, found on the Internet. A Web site containing 20 creative games and activities that supplement basic grammar instruction and lesson plans was created.

In conclusion, the primary goal of the authors was to produce an easily accessible Spanish language resource that would enhance teacher instruction and materials so that content would accentuate and facilitate active, student-centered learning. The authors attempted to create this instructional aide with hopes that Spanish teachers nationwide would accumulate more useful and sound activities for their own personal teaching resources. It was also hoped that this Web site would act as a forum for teachers to exchange information, to offer feedback, and to help the site grow and expand.

The 20 activities should prove to be reliable and valuable. They are self-explanatory and are intended to be only supplemental activities.

As stated before, the authors focused on Spanish. It is recommended that these activities be used in conjunction with the teacher's normal lesson plan. Other recommendations include allowing more time to peruse the World Wide Web in search of similar resources that are available and becoming familiar with *Claris Homepage*® or another type of a Web site production program.

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## APPENDIX A

## SAMPLE MASTER'S SURVEY

Thank you to all of the Spanish teachers that have taken the time to fill out this survey. This survey is an instrument to obtain information regarding access and use of resources used in the Spanish classroom. This information will be documented in a Central Washington University Master's Project.

1. Please circle the appropriate number that is closest to your Spanish teaching experience.

1-3 years      4-7 years      8-10 years      11 or more years

2. Do you have access to the Internet?

Yes @ school      Yes @ home

No @ school      No @ home

3. Do you feel you have an ample amount of supplemental activities and/or games for your lessons?

Yes      No

4. If you answered No in question #3, and/or Yes for question # 2, would you use the Internet to access a Spanish Web-site to obtain supplemental activities and/or games?

Yes      No

5. On a scale of 1-5, do you feel that games and activities are an effective way to teach a foreign language?

Least effective      Most effective  
1      2      3      4      5

APPENDIX B

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# Juegos de Educación

En Español



Enter

## BIENVENIDOS

Este sitio fue desarrollado para todos los profesores de español. Contiene veinte juegos y actividades que se puede usar en la clase con otros materiales académicos. Los autores de este sitio creen que el uso de los juegos y actividades es la mejor manera de enseñar el idioma. Requiere la participación de los estudiantes y la participación de movimiento del cuerpo, lo que es el otro método bueno para recordar información.

Elige una categoría: Juegos...

del ESCUCHAR

del HABLAR/ESCUCHAR

del HABLAR/LEER

del ESCRIBIR

Drawing Blind\*

A Plane Trip\*

Las Sillas Musicales

Add a Word\*

Simon Dice

Baseball

Once More w/ Feeling\*

Bingo Tic-Tac-Toe\*

Bat Game

Snowballs

Ladders

Betting Game

The box\*

Omit a Verb\*

Bump

Find Your Partners\*

Obstacles\*

Pass the Message\*

Quien Soy

Something in Common\*

HOME PAGE

LINKS to other Educational Spanish sites

COMMENTS: The creators of this web page would like to know what you think of this site and the activities within the site. All comments are welcomed and can be sent to: [jsmith@cwu.edu](mailto:jsmith@cwu.edu)

\* These games were found in: Action Plans: 80 Student Centered Language Activities by M. Macdonald & S. Rogers-Gordon, and Second Language Practice: Strategies for Developing Communicative Competence, Magic or Chaos, by C.B. Paulston & G. Britanik.

Please note: The text of this website (the rest of appendix B) was not included due to copyright concerns.