

## Reflection on TFLTA Conference

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The topic of the first session was *Global Awareness and Humanities in the Foreign Language Classroom throughout Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) Institutions*. Juan A. Alonso Santillana, a full-time Spanish instructor at Chattanooga State Community College was the presenter. During the session, Juan presented the research statistics and the results of a survey regarding the role of Humanities and global awareness in foreign language classes, in which all full-time foreign language instructors at TBR institutions participated. From the statistics and results, he underscored the acute need to teach foreign languages in TBR institutions and advocated that a “baby step” should be taken to send as a petition to TBR to list foreign language classes as a Humanities/General Education option in their degree programs.

I was impressed by Juan’s courage and enthusiasm to take this “baby step”. His humor throughout the session also added fun to the presentation. I agree with Juan on many of his perspectives. Just as Juan showed in the presentation, there are a growing number of people in Tennessee who speak languages other than English, and foreign trade and investment is increasingly common in the state of Tennessee. These facts indicate that if one can speak a foreign language, he is able to communicate with a wider group of people, and his likelihood of finding a job in a company that has foreign elements will increase. As a foreign language teacher, I see numerous benefits of learning a foreign language among various student populations in various schools and institutions. For example, learning a foreign language raises one’s intercultural awareness, better prepares one for the globalized job market, and enables one to explore different parts of the world. However, a problem lies here: While language teachers can use countless reasons to justify the learning of a foreign language and

we can easily pull the thousands of hundreds of foreign language teachers throughout the country to join the choir, shouldn't we hear different voices? Shouldn't we open this discussion to economists, politicians, engineers, or at least students and teachers in other fields of study besides foreign languages? To me, the statistics and the survey results are rather unilateral, since all participants are full-time foreign language faculty. Without hearing the voices of other professions, it is unlikely that a well-thought decision will be made that can maximize the learning outcome of students at TBR institutions.

The second session I attended was *Loving Spanish Class in Only 15 Minutes!* where the presenter introduced us to a variety of videos and music available online that Spanish teachers can play when their class becomes dull. I found these multimedia resources interesting and I assume that students will find so, too. To my surprise, the whole presentation focused on listing to interesting videos and songs, not illustrating to us how Spanish teachers could tap into these resources to teach students something out of them, or how teachers could use relevant videos and music as an introductory activity and guide students throughout the class. The same problem existed in the third session I attended – *Culture and Vocabulary through German Pop Musik* – where the presenters merely introduced a list of German pop music websites, without mentioning much about how to teach culture and vocabulary through this variety of multimedia resources. Lack of methodological approaches and connections between multimedia and language instruction is the core problem of these two presentations. If I ever have the opportunity to present in similar conferences, I will focus more on methods on how to incorporate multimedia in foreign language classrooms. By facilitating student learning and improving language skills while promoting their interest in the target language, I address what I believe language teachers are most yearningly seeking.