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# A Francophile in the North Cascades

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## A Francophile in the North Cascades

*Sarah Stevens, Western Washington University*

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### **Abstract**

*The fields of cultural studies and environmental studies are often disconnected. Even the tagline, 'act locally, think globally' tends to refer to realizing how local ecological processes are related to global processes (Thomashow, 2002). Culture is left out of this interpretation of the phrase. I believe that in order to address global environmental issues cultural awareness needs to be part of the solution. My experience with learning French language and culture has convinced me that second language acquisition can be an effective way to bring cultural studies into the world of environmental studies.*

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### **Keywords: environmental education, Francophile, French language, identity**

The fields of cultural studies and environmental studies are often disconnected. Even the tagline, 'act locally, think globally' tends to refer to realizing how local ecological processes are related to global processes (Thomashow, 2002). Culture is left out of this interpretation of the phrase. I believe that in order to address global environmental issues cultural awareness needs to be part of the solution. My experience with learning French language and culture has convinced me that second language acquisition can be an effective way to bring cultural studies into the world of environmental studies.

Seven years of studying French, Psychology and Environmental Education have led to my interest in examining the linkages between four major constructs essential to cultivating a community of culturally intelligent, locally active and globally minded citizens. Interactions between linguistic communities, or lack there of, shape environmental discourse. Second language acquisition is an opportunity to learn another way of interpreting the world. Place-based education offers a powerful methodology for introducing students to both the natural and cultural components that constitute place. Globalization, as is typically defined, challenges ideals such as cultural and bio- diversity. Reimagining globalization through the lens of cultural theory allows us to see how it can actually encourage cultural and environmental awareness. Linguistic communities, language acquisition pedagogy, place-based education and globalization are all concepts integral to fostering cultural and environmental awareness. To appreciate how these concepts relate to one another, a more nuanced exploration of the term 'community' needs to be made.

Our community influences our perception of the world. Community is a very broad term and can refer to a group of people,



living in a particular area, having a shared history or common social, economic, political or professional interests (Merriam Webster). All these definitions relate to groupings of people and their experiences within a certain locale. The communities we belong to are impactful on how we interact with others, the earth and ourselves.

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### **Linguistic Communities**

Our linguistic community in particular shapes our reality. The language we communicate in is a way of reflecting our interpretation of the world to others. Language and words are vehicles for the transference of our perception of reality, not reality itself. By learning another language, we improve our capacity to interpret the world in new ways. Similarly, by including multilingual perspectives in environmental discourses, we broaden the scope of whose voices are heard on global environmental issues.

There are enormous benefits to including multiple language communities in any field of discourse. “The promise of doing systematic, cross-community comparisons of theory lies in its potential to expose widely accepted assumptions and to allow them to be challenged” (Whiteside, 2002, 5). Despite these benefits, international publication systems for scientific discourse, from which a large amount of environmental theory gathers its weight, vastly favors English contributions to the archives of ‘legitimate scientific research’.

Ulrich (Ammon, 2012) makes the case that in natural sciences the number of published articles in English exponentially exceeds articles in languages that historically have been equal to English including Chinese, French, German, Italian and Russian. This discrepancy is less pronounced in the social sciences and humanities; however, even looking at the titles available in these different languages in Worldcat, the world’s largest library catalog, the difference between English titles (over 40,000,000) and French titles (over 4,000,000) is over 36,000,000 (Ammon, 2012, 345). In the academic world, including environmental discourse, English is the most widely accepted language of discourse, even though it only represents one linguistic community.

Not opening up the global environmental discourse to multiple linguistic communities has wide reaching impacts. In a commentary piece exploring the effects of the Anglo-American hegemony in the field of human geography, Robert Hassink (2007) talks about the narrowing effect of this uneven distribution of power. Upholding English as the language of discourse leads to marginalization of areas and marginalization of colleagues. English requirements for articles in international publications, cause non-native English speaking researchers to look into topics that dominate the Anglo-American discourse rather than locally relevant issues in order to get published. The translation of studies into English often is inadequate to represent the subtleties of the language it is translated from and does nothing to alter the standard of English as the only relevant language for human geography and all

environmental discourse. Beyond just publications, the second class standing that non-native English speakers have at international conferences also reinforces the Anglo-American hegemony. In order to remedy this situation Hassink and Ammon have a few suggestions

Ammon (2012) suggests that non-standard English or a newly created international English be accepted into the dominant 'lingua franca' of scientific discourse. Hassink (2007), encourages the academic world to accept multilingual papers and references, with glossaries that explain non-english words. He states "multilingual geographers need to become the standard, not something exotic. By being open to foreign language quotes and references and by not translating the untranslatable, we might find the way between accepting English as the lingua franca, but at the same time saving at least some precious geographical diversity" (Hassink, 2007, 1286). Making multilingual papers the standard for environmental studies, it is the first step toward a truly international discussion on environmental issues. In tandem with making multilingual discourse the norm for environmental publications, it's necessary to teach second languages in ways that will build a multilingual community of environmentally minded citizens.

Incorporating place-based education techniques into language learning pedagogy could be an effective way to cultivate environmental connection and citizenry within a second language acquisition setting. To better understand how these two educational frameworks can fit together, it is necessary to present some of the integral components that define each of them, and to see how they fit into the idea of globalization.

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### **Place-based Education**

*Place-based or place-conscious education introduces children and youth to the skills and dispositions needed to regenerate and sustain communities. It achieves this end by drawing on local phenomena as the source of at least a share of children's learning experiences, helping them to understand the processes that underlie the health of natural and social systems essential to human welfare. (Gruenewald & Smith, 2008, xvi)*

This definition of place-based education aligns with four key principles of language learning. Language lessons and curriculum can be framed in ways that connect students to local phenomena, natural and social, that will help them not only learn and connect with the target language, but also begin to think critically about how language, culture and environment all interact to constitute what a place is.

Place is an interaction of communities in a locale over time (Walters, 1998). Walters (1998) takes this idea further and talks about the feelings of a place.

*A place has no feelings apart from the human experience there. But a place is a location of experience. It evokes and organizes memories, images, feelings, meanings, and the work of imagination. The feelings of a place are indeed the mental projections of individuals, but they come from collective experience and they do not happen anywhere else. They belong to the place. (Walters, 1998, 21)*

This interpretation of feelings of place brings to attention the unique role communities play in the evolution of what defines a locale. The interaction of communities of life, human and non-human are entrance points for language learning in a way that engages the student and connects them to things that are very tangible and relatable, because they are grounded in the location of learning.

An example of a place-based language learning approach is the Allen Elementary School summer language class offered to English as Second Language learners who attend the school. Here students spend the day exploring the local ecosystems around Burlington and learn English through direct contact with the real world, in spaces that are relevant to their everyday life. This approach not only connects students to the target language, but also develops student's understanding of the ecological processes present in their local bioregion.

Learning how ecological systems function in a particular bioregion can be limiting if students are not encouraged to imagine how these systems continue to function at larger scales. "What's crucial in learning to perceive global environmental change is that you practice how to think about the relationship between places, and in so doing, you come to understand how global patterns may be interpreted from the time and place where you happen to be" (Thomashow, 2002, 9). Thomashow explores how place-based education can help prepare students to think about global scale environmental issues. He refers to localities around the globe interfacing on local patterns of natural phenomena to get a more global understanding of environmental change (Thomashow, 2002, 6-7). What is missing from Thomashow's presentation of the utility of place-based education to create an informed global community is the discussion around how the idea of culture and globalization are integrated into a place-based curriculum. To understand global environmental issues as well as ideas around global economy and globalization, it is useful to break down these terms.

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## **Globalization**

In a book titled *Environmentalism and Cultural Theory*, Milton (1998) explores how the term globalization is defined within or outside of culture. The world systems model, sees globalization as a process of the centre, more industrially developed nation-states, impacting the social and environmental situations of the periphery, less developed

nation-states. This perspective looks at what is happening in terms of globalization outside of culture. Another definition of globalization is one that looks at how modern institutions, capitalist economies, nation-state systems, world military order and the international division of labor, expand well beyond the reaches of pre-modern cultures, where knowledge is embedded in the context of its use. This definition, while incorporating culture into its framework, only does so by seeing globalization as the result of a modernist ideology.

Seeing globalization as the result of Western culture's influence on the rest of the world makes place-based education an ineffective means to create a global community of culturally and environmentally minded citizens. It roots any comparison of local phenomena to global processes in the assumption that in order for a process to be considered global, it must look a certain way, have a certain language, be within a certain economic or political constraint. The definition of globalization must be altered to be more inclusive of the ways in which globalization is conceived and enacted (Milton, 1998).

Robertson offers a new definition of globalization that sees the process as occurring within and outside of culture. "Globalization as a concept refers both to the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole" (Robertson, 1992 as cited in Milton, 1998). This definition sees globalization as a processes that brings together distant locals through participation in a single system of politics, economics or communications and as a process that changes what people think, feel and know about the world (Milton, 1998, 164-165). This definition of globalization applies to ecologists who view the entire world as one ecosystem, and environmentalists who see a global economy as environmentally destructive and work towards self-sufficiency, or 'deglobalization'. In this way, place-based education can fit within the construct of globalization, either as a means to promote worldwide efforts to document global ecological phenomena, or to 'decolonize' and 'reinhabite' the earth.

The idea of using place-based education to address global issues of colonization and global economy is explored in Smith and Gruenewald's book *Place-based Education in the Global Age: Local Diversity* (2008). Focusing on lived experience of place connects both culture and environment. Gruenewald says:

*A critical pedagogy of place posits two fundamental goals for education: decolonization and reinhabitation. Decolonization roughly equates with the deeper agenda of culturally responsive teaching: to undo the damage done by multiple forms of oppression. Reinhabitation roughly equates with the deeper agenda of many environmental educators: to learn how to live well together in a place without doing damage to others, human and nonhuman. Pedagogically, these two interrelated goals translate into a set of questions that can be put to any group of learners on any place on earth: what is happening here? What happened here? What should happen here? What needs to be transformed, conserved, restored, or created in this place?.... such questions provide a local focus for socioecological inquiry and action that, because of interrelated cultural and ecological systems, is potentially global in reach. (148-149)*

By addressing socioecological phenomena within the context of place, Gruenewald suggests that cultural as well as environmental awareness can be developed. I would argue that using place-based education as the context for teaching a second language is an effective entry point into discussions of culture and ecology.

Language is linguistically formed culture (Risager, 2006, 6). It embodies conceptual systems and worldviews that relate meaning and context. “Language development and socialization contribute to the development of cultural identities and cultural models of the world” (Risager, 2006, 6). By learning another language, you increase your cultural awareness, or ability to see that there are multiple ways to reach similar goals and to live life.

Learning a second language is very different than learning your native language. Our native language is typically learned through family, early childhood experience that contributes to our fundamental social, emotional and intellectual development (Risager, 2006, 7). A second language is learned either early on in life or later, as a result of either schooling or personal education with the aim of being able to participate in a society, read specialized literature in the original language or be able to use the language during travel (Risager, 2006, 7). Because learning a second language is so directed toward a specific end, it is possible for educators to foster within students, what that end may be. In place-based education it can be raising cultural and environmental awareness. A look into some common principles in Second Language Acquisition theory helps clarify how this is possible.

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## **Second Language Acquisition**

There are many theories of second language acquisition used in western culture as the basis of language learning instruction. Both behaviorist approaches that see language as mechanical process of habit formation and mentalist interpretations that language is a mental phenomenon governed by internal mechanisms have shaped modern Second Language Acquisition theory and pedagogy. Beyond just cognitive aspects, there are many social perspectives to the field of language acquisition (Ellis and Shintani, 2014).

Ellis and Shintani (2014) introduce their book *Exploring Language Pedagogy through Second Language Acquisition Research* with an overview of the historical development of language acquisition theory, and examine current trends in language teaching. Eleven key principles of instructed language learning are explored in the following chapters, of which four align with principles of place-based education.

Key principles in language learning that can be easily used within a place-based educational approach include: meaning focused instruction, development of implicit knowledge of the target language, taking individual differences of learners into account and recognizing that there is a subjective aspect to language learning. Meaning focused

instruction can easily use place specific content and context. The implicit knowledge necessary for fluency is developed through communicative activities, and can occur in programs that focus on student driven inquiry. Taking into account individual differences in learners can include providing multiple learning strategies for the students to connect personally with the language and place simultaneously. Probably the most obvious connection to place-based education is within the subjective aspect of learning a new language, which emphasizes the importance of using language acquisition as an opportunity to develop critical awareness within learners that can directly relate to local communities and cultures. By learning a second language within the framework of place-based education, students develop cultural and environmental awareness.

What might a program that integrates place-based education and language learning look like? How might it cultivate a group of citizens that are both culturally and environmentally aware? For the final part of this paper I'd like to imagine what this kind of program might look like within a language learning summer camp.

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### ***Summer Camps as a place for Place-based Language Acquisition***

The history of American summer camp is entwined with modern, industrial cultural ideals and values. The first summer camps were made as a way to mold select young adults into proper citizens with an appreciation for the outdoors and hardwork (Paris, 2008, 20). Camp was seen as the perfect place to indoctrinate young adults in societal values and behavior. What it has become is so much more than that. Certainly, camps are still places for select groups of children and young adults to be exposed to whatever set of skills, knowledge or experience the program team plans. It is also a place for children to develop a sense of their own identity and develop cognitively and physically, away from direct family contact, outside of their usual social realm.

In a study conducted by Thurber, Scanlin, Scheuler and Henderson (2006), thousands of families, whose kids attend one of eighty different resident camps for a week or longer, showed significant positive change in areas of positive identity, social skills, physical and thinking skills and positive values and spirituality. Six months later, most of these gains were maintained or continued to grow. I think this speaks to the extremely positive benefits camps have for children who attend. Camp is an effective way to both teach kids specific values and enhance their development as individuals. Values of cultural and environmental awareness can be fostered at language camp.

Bringing attention to larger concepts of globalization and how it impacts cultures and environments can be easier to do if the entry point into the discussion is based on learning a foreign language. For example, discussing how language and place influence something as basic as bread, or learning about the importance of biodiversity in intertidal zones and how scientists from around the world study it are two examples of



language lessons that have both cultural and environmental awareness skills built into them. The camp setting allows for a focused exploration of these and many other topics.

I've developed lesson plans for the two examples given and include them here to demonstrate how the concepts of language acquisition, cultural awareness and environmental awareness can be put into practice. They are part of a larger Natural and Cultural History Curriculum developed for Canoe Island French Camp. Using language learning at a summer camp setting to foster creation of culturally intelligent, engaged local and global citizens is an example of how transferable environmental ideals are to all areas of education.

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### **Breadmaking Lesson**

#### **Objectives:**

- For campers to gain an understanding of the process of making bread.
- For campers to think and discuss how bread is related to language and culture.

#### **Vocabulary:**

*Le levain- starter*

*Le sel- salt*

*La farine- flour*

*De l'eau- water*

*Le pain- bread*

*La levure- yeast*

*La farine complète- whole wheat flour*

*La pate- dough*

*Pétrir- knead*

*Tamiser- sift*

*Lever- rise*

#### **Procedure:**

- Set up the space for the lesson with the key ingredients for bread displayed, including (whole wheat flour, white flour, salt, yeast, and starter)
- Talk with campers about their connection to bread
  - What is their favorite bread?
  - Is there any bread that is special to their family?
  - Share a story of your own relating to bread
- Talk about how bread is like culture
  - Brainstorm some ways that bread is similar to culture

- Breads are place specific (they have distinct ingredients based on where they are made)
- There are different rituals and ways of making bread (unleavened vs leavened bread)
- Language around bread: what bread is called, phrases relating to bread in different languages and culture
- Talk about the significance of bread in France
  - List different kinds of bread in France
  - Talk about the law of what constitutes 'pain traditionnel'
  - The stories of how baguettes came to be
- Have group prepare bread dough using the starter and teach French vocabulary and verbs associated with bread making
- Meet with chefs to shape dough
- Have campers pair up and create their own recipe for 'Le Pain de Canoe'.
- Have pairs share their recipe in a tutorial on how to make it (en Français). What makes their bread unique to Canoe Island? What occasion would you eat this bread?

**Extension:**

- For a longer project you can capture wild yeasts from the island for campers to make their own Canoe Island Sourdough Starter. Ideas around island colonization and species dispersal can be worked into the discussion. (species colonized the island through air and water dispersal, similarly, the yeasts are colonizing the starter through the air). The French vocabulary and verbs for these island ecology concepts can be found in the Island Ecology lesson.

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## **Tides and Tidepool Lesson**

### **Key Concepts/ Vocabulary:**

Tides	La marée
Tidal force	les forces de la marée
Gravitational pull	la force de gravité
Moon's tidal force	la force marémotrice
Terrestrial tide	la marée terrestre
Oceanic tide	la marée océanique
High Tide	la marée haute
Low Tide	la marée basse
Ebb	le reflux
Slack water	la mer étale
Tidal Range	l'amplitude des marées
Tide charts	annuaire des marées
Intertidal Zones	la zone intertidale
Vertical Zonation	la zonation verticale
Tidepool	La bache
Splash zone	la zone éclaboussée
High-tide zone	la zone d'haute marée
Mid-tide zone	la zone de moyenne marée
Low-tide zone	la zone de marée basse
Barnacles	la barnache
Mussels	les moules
Sea anemones	l'anémone de mer
Tube worms	les verres de mer
Seaweeds	l'algue
Sea urchins	l'oursin
Limpets	la lampotte
Crabs	le crabe
Sea stars	l'étoile de mer
Sea cucumbers	l'holothurie
Snails	l'escargot de mer
Plankton	le plancton

### **Objectives:**

- Campers will learn the rule of 12ths and be able to explain what impacts it has on intertidal life and boaters in the San Juans
- Campers will demonstrate knowledge of the intertidal zones and life by explaining adaptations that species have for life in the different zones.

- Campers will learn and demonstrate French vocabulary associated with these concepts through assessment involving storytelling or drawing and labeling.
- Campers will synthesize concepts of biodiversity and sustainable marine ecosystems through an oral assessment

### **Procedure:**

1. Introduce campers to Jean-Michel Cousteau, and his father's influence on marine research and conservation. Show them the video of Philippe exploring the Pacific North West waters: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_e47ptoq3a4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_e47ptoq3a4)
2. Let campers know that they don't need scuba gear to explore the ocean world! They just need an understanding of the tides and the life that can be found in the intertidal zone! Head down to the beach.
3. Introduce campers to the world of tidepools and marine life by having them bioblitz and count as many different species as they can for 15 minutes. Be sure to front load them with how to tidepool in a safe and respectful way to their safety and the safety of the things they are observing.
4. Have them take notes on: the anatomy of the species observed, whether they think it's plant/ animal/ mineral etc., colors, soft or hard, where the species is from the mal maison beach (closer to mal maison, or closer to the dock?)
5. Have the campers share some of the things that they saw and have them place it on the intertidal zone map in their field book. Have everyone say the vocabulary en francais for each of the species described.
6. Introduce the rule of 12ths, how it impacts life and about the adaptations intertidal creatures have to live in their ever-changing environment.
7. Talk about how much biodiversity there is in our intertidal zones of the Pacific Northwest and how this is important for both land and sea animals. This could be demonstrated with a web of life game as much in francais as possible
8. Segue into Plankton Lesson or follow up with looking at the marine bucket on the dock as a segue into how biodiversity is monitored by scientists, like Jean-Michel Cousteau

### **Assessment:**

- Have the group recount a full day of intertidal exploration en français. As if they were Jean-Michel Cousteau
- Every person must have a speaking part; there should be at least 3 species mentioned from each zone and their adaptations; a representation of how the landscape changed over the course of 12 hours should be made; A suggestion on how they would monitor biodiversity here; why these studies are important.

**Extensions:**

- Campers could research an area of the Francophone world and look into what kinds of marine life are there and what the role a specific species plays in the ecosystem.
- A mock panel discussion en français about how humans can try to conserve intertidal biodiversity including what kinds of international agreements would need to be reached.



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