



National Standards for Language Learning and 21st Century Skills for World Languages – How does the Sony Virtuoso™ Language Lab Technology Measure Up?

by Marisol Greenwald, Language Teacher

Let me take this opportunity to address the National Standards for Foreign Language Education and the 21st Century Skills Map for World Languages and how the Sony language lab technology that I teach with provides a platform to easily provide students with lessons and activities to help develop these skills.

National Standards – The 5Cs



First and most obvious: The language lab is the ideal arena to integrate the three modes of communication (Interpretive, Interpersonal and Presentational) and develop language skills. Let's look at the 5 C's - the five goals for language learning as identified by the National Standards for

Foreign Language Education¹: **Communication, Culture, Connections, Comparisons and Communities.** The very nature of a language lab supports these goals.

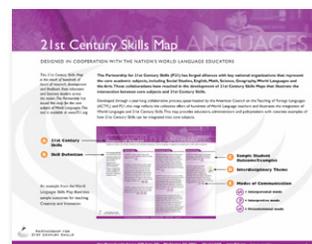
- 1. Communication** — the ability to understand and convey ideas orally and in writing. These include listening to authentic audio, presenting information, exchanging ideas, etc.
- 2. Culture** — the study of the language and of the people who speak the language. The two are impossible to separate. Authentic audio, video clips, Internet resources, music, etc. offer insight into the lives of those who speak the language and provide a way for students to learn about the culture by studying the products, practices and perspectives of the target area cultures and comparing them with their own.
- 3. Connections** — the transfer of knowledge and its application to different situations in the target language.

Students who are able to research a variety of topics such as finances, geography, history, politics, religions, etc. and discuss these with native speakers in their language have developed a better sense of global awareness. The key factor in all is the ability to use the target language in a variety of settings.

- 4. Comparisons** — the study of similarities and differences between languages and cultures. As students engage in authentic language activities, they are forced to reflect on the differences and similarities and, in so doing, gain a better understanding of their own language and culture.
- 5. Communities** — the extension from classroom to community offers experience with real-life situations. This could be as basic as writing emails to students in other schools, cities or countries. The technology is now available for students to interact with native speakers, making their language study applicable outside the school environment.

Having reviewed each of these standards and how they can be applied to language lab activities demonstrates how supportive the language lab is of language learning goals set by the national standards.

21st Century Learning Skills



A lot of research is being done to map the skills needed to be a 21st Century Skilled Learner. These maps tell us that this learner is one who understands and can communicate with native speakers about a variety of world topics. These 21st

century learners understand our differences and similarities, how others think, live and view the world. None of this can be achieved without direct communication. In the past, emphasis was placed on making students read and learn about other cultures, research their ideals and customs, and observe

¹ ACTFL National Standards – www.actfl.org With the help of a three-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education and the National Endowment for the Humanities, an eleven-member task force, representing a variety of languages, levels of instruction, program models, and geographic regions, undertook the task of defining content standards — what students should know and be able to do — in foreign language education. The final document, *Standards for Foreign Language Learning: Preparing for the 21st Century*

other lifestyles. Today, the focus has changed to an interactive study, one that requires the use of the target language and the application of the standards. We speak the language, we don't speak about it. This is exactly what the language lab emphasizes.

A task force under the direction of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), working in conjunction with the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (P21)², developed the P21 Skills Map for World Languages which identifies specific ways of integrating necessary skills into the curriculum. In the study, a "Then and Now" look at language teaching gives us a clear perspective on how things have changed. I'd like to focus on some of the points made in the P21 map, add some of my own, and, once again, underline how language lab technology facilitates the current trend.

In the Past	Current Focus	Language Lab as Facilitator
Students learn about the language.	Students learn to use the language.	All students are engaged in active oral and written communication.
Teacher-centered class.	Teacher is facilitator.	Monitoring capabilities allow teachers to assist as needed and to individualize that assistance.
Focus on isolated skills.	Focus on three modes– interpersonal, interpretive and presentational and the integration of all language skills.	Lessons easily integrate all language skills. Most lab activities are designed to include more than one component.
Only teaching language.	Teaching language within many contexts as an academic content area.	While using authentic language, students learn more than language, they also learn culture, history, geography, etc.
Same instruction for all.	Differentiated instruction.	The lab allows students to self-pace and teachers to assign different outcomes simultaneously by grouping students with different tasks as needed.
Emphasis on teacher as presenter.	Individual students or groups become the presenters.	Model student and model group facilitate the role of the student as the presenter.
Students work in isolation.	Students collaborate on tasks and become creators.	Pairing, conferencing and screen-sharing encourage collaborative work in a focused environment.
Students take turns participating.	All students are actively engaged 100% of the time.	No need to call on students one at a time. Most activities are conducted with all students participating simultaneously.
Assessment of what students do not know.	Assessment of what students are able to do in the target language.	Lab features allow students to demonstrate knowledge in an easy to administer, collect and evaluate format.

About the Author:

Marisol Greenwald is a Spanish language educator at the high school and community college levels. Marisol has authored several instructional books on integrating technology into world language classes and is an educational consultant to SANS Inc.

² P21 – www.p21.org The Partnership for 21st Century Skills (P21) has forged alliances with key national organizations that represent the core academic subjects. These collaborations have resulted in the development of 21st Century Skills Maps that illustrate the intersection between core subjects and 21st Century Skills. Developed through a year-long collaborative process, spearheaded by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) and P21, this map reflects the collective effort of hundreds of World Language teachers and illustrates the integration of World Languages and 21st Century Skills.



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