
Discovering the Treasure in the NECTFL Reports on CD-ROM!

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Introduction

Fifty years of time-tested instructional strategies, professional writing on policy questions, reports, narratives, interview and survey results, and reflection on one searchable CD. Whether browsing, reminiscing, or researching, you will find what you need using this unique professional tool! Foreign language teaching and learning, second language acquisition, and the study of world languages has been an evolving field, each year building on the successes of the previous one. As the field continues to evolve and change, teachers, students and researchers are in constant need of information, tools and resources. One tool that has proven extremely useful and easy to use, with quality information related to the teaching of foreign languages, is a CD compilation of 50 years of the Northeast Conference Reports. The CD is an excellent resource for the teacher-as-learner, provides a wealth of information for the teacher-as-researcher, and has a variety of best practices for the teacher-as-practitioner in the classroom. This article is written by a university methods professor who uses the CD in three classes, and two in-service foreign language teachers, both of whom are former students and who have used the CD. Our objective is to explore some of the many uses of the CD while clearly demonstrating what a treasure of information is available on this one item. We will answer the following questions: Why use the NECTFL CD? Who might use the NECTFL CD? What are some samples of ways to use

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the NECTFL CD? How does one use the NECTFL CD? What do teachers have to say about using the NECTFL CD?

Why use the NECTFL CD?

- It provides a wealth of information — 10,000 pages in a single source
- It saves time from doing an on-line search
- It is a convenient catalogue of foreign and second language issues covering a 50-year period.

Who might use the CD?

- K – 12 classroom teachers
- University professors, instructors, researchers
- Methods professors
- Professional development organizers and facilitators

Whether pre-service or in-service, educators recognize that learning is a continuous process. Several current methods classes are using the NECTFL CD as an ancillary tool to assist aspiring and new teachers in their learning process. With 50 years of information dedicated to teaching foreign language, the CD provides the opportunity to search popular topics throughout the history of the profession.

Samples of Ways to Use the CD

The following are samples of activities successfully used in university methods classes:

- Select one topic from the themes in this course and search the NECTFL CD for at least three articles. Examine the articles from multiple perspectives, i.e., stance, identity, agency, teachers, learner.
- Search the NECTFL CD to trace the use of technology and FL teaching and learning. Create a timeline and explore the growth of multimedia.
- Search the NECTFL CD for articles on reading strategies. Compare and contrast your findings with the articles read in class.
- Search the CD for articles on using authentic materials to teach listening. Prepare an activity to demonstrate what you learned. Include ways to accommodate heritage language learners and special needs learners.

The topic of teachers as researchers and agents of change has been a hot topic in the field of education, especially as we find ourselves moving toward a more “socially just” approach to education. Nowhere in the field of foreign languages is it easier to find a more comprehensive and quality resource than the NECTFL CD from which to draw information and data in conducting one’s own research and theories. The *Reports* are compiled of subjects written by both

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“working committees” and by respected and invited authors who represent an important knowledge base and authority in the field of foreign language education. Because the CD is arranged by year, the trends in research and current topics in teaching foreign language can be tracked and built upon. Figure 1 illustrates a selection of topics and titles by decade extracted from the CD.

Figure 1. Sample Topics and Titles By Decade

1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000
The Qualifications of Language Teachers	Teaching of Classical Cultures	Leadership for Continuing Development	Proficiency, Articulation, Curriculum: The Ties That Bind	Reflecting on Proficiency from a Classroom Perspective	Agents of Change in a Changing Age
The Teaching of Literature	The Case for Latin Study Abroad	Other Words, Other Worlds — Language in Culture	Shaping the Future: Challenges and Opportunities	Shifting the Instructional Focus to the Learner	Changing Contexts in Language Learning
The Role of Foreign Language In American Life	The Challenge of Bilingualism	Goals Clarification; Curriculum Teaching Clarification	Toward a New Integration of Language and Culture	Stories Teachers Tell: Reflecting on Professional Practice	Teaching in Changing Times
Linguistic Aids for Foreign Language Teaching	The Sensible and Sensitive Use of Audio-visual Aids	The Foreign Language Learner in Today's Classroom Environment	The Language Teachers: Commitment and Collaboration	Language Learners of Tomorrow: Process and Promise	

How to search the NECTFL CD

1. Adobe Acrobat Reader® must be installed on your computer to read the CD.
2. Insert the 50 Years of NECTFL CD into the CD or DVD drive of your computer with the blue printed side facing up.
3. The CD will automatically load. Wait until you see the opening page which will prompt you to “**Click here to begin.**”
4. With your mouse, left click on the word “**Begin.**” You will then see the first page that will give you three options. **A.** Choose a NECTFL report in the bookmark section. **B.** Search the NECTFL Reports by keyword. **C.** Visit the NECTFL website (www.nectfl.org). We suggest that you experiment with all three. However, this guide will focus on option **B.**
5. Left click your mouse over Search NECTFL Reports by keyword.
6. The words “**Search the CD-ROM**” will appear. Left click your mouse over the SEARCH icon below the main title.

7. A small Adobe Acrobat reader text box will appear. Your cursor will automatically be in that box.
8. Type in a keyword of interest to you and hit the enter key. *Hint:* Try many variations of a key word to produce larger or more diverse results. After a few seconds the search results will appear in chronological order in the text box. Using your mouse, double click on the desired year of interest.
9. You will automatically be brought to the actual word in the text of the article. You may then browse or read the article by scrolling up or down the text using your scroll bar to the right of the screen.
10. The tool bar at the top of your computer screen includes many options such as go back to search results, move ahead or back, change size of the text, new search and so on.

“I used the NECTFL CD to gather data, practices and ideas about the role of homework in the foreign language classroom...”

What do teachers have to say?

Three teachers who have used the CD were selected and asked their opinions. The names of the following teachers have been changed to protect their anonymity.

“The CD’s search engine allows users to search by keyword for any topic pertaining to foreign language over the last 50 years. I am a career switcher in my first year as a Spanish teacher. My methods professor requires her classes to purchase the CD and I found it invaluable for completing my teacher action research project. I used the NECTFL CD to gather data, practices and ideas about the role of homework in the foreign language classroom on which to base my research for successfully improving the frequency of my students’ using the language outside of the classroom. Whatever the research topic may be, a teacher-researcher is bound to find a plethora of information to help them formulate their ideas, practices, and hypotheses.” — Cristina, Middle School Spanish teacher, Fall 2004.

“I have used the NECTFL CD-Rom on several occasions. I have found it to be very useful for a variety of reasons. First, the ability to find articles on various topics that span 50 years of research makes the CD a valuable resource. I have been able to compare articles on “grammar instruction” from the 1970s to the new millennium. Second, the quality of the articles is exceptional. Lastly, the variety of topics covered on the CD makes this a tool that every teacher/researcher should have.” — Maria, Spanish Teaching Assistant, Spring 2005.

“The CD was very useful and user-friendly. What I like most is being able to see how language acquisition evolved throughout the years and how one can compare that to the many iterations of foreign language methods and approaches. One thing that I got from the CD is a confirmation of an old idea of mine: not everything that we did or used in the past should be dismissed as ‘old fashioned.’ After using the CD for three classes, I am more and more convinced that we

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should use a mix of techniques in the classroom.” — Cindy, High School French teacher, Fall 2004.

Conclusion

By providing years of research and compiling the information in one easy to use tool, teachers can begin to implement changes in their classrooms as they focus on the practical aspects of the profession. In addition to providing the foundations necessary for research, the CD is an invaluable tool for providing best practices ideas, techniques, and perspectives. Much of the information contained in the *Reports* can be applied immediately to the classroom, including topics such as performance assessments, student-centered classrooms, standards, and the use of culture in the classroom. The NECTFL CD is a great way for researchers and practitioners to share their knowledge and impact the field of foreign languages in a very real and practical manner.

The use of the CD containing 50 years' of Northeast Conference *Reports* has been accepted both by professors and learners of foreign language teaching. It provides essential tools for educators to continue down their learning path, teachers who wish to implement action research projects in their classrooms, and practitioners looking to implement best practices ideas. The volume of information available with ease and the quality of authors and topics make this CD an essential tool for anyone involved in the foreign language profession. Future considerations and suggestions are that the CD be continually updated with the most recent issues of the *Reports* and that the search engine be updated to allow for more than keyword searches. If the search engine is able in the future to provide results listed by relevance and/or author, this tool will be even easier to use than how helpful it has already been for many in the field of foreign languages.

Teacher educators, practitioners, archivists, students, and researchers have all praised the CD as a means to accomplish important tasks, efficiently and productively. We invite everyone to join us in discovering the treasure of this CD that includes the most up-to-date ideas as well as rewarding trips down memory lane! To purchase a copy of the CD, call 717-245-1977 or email nectfl@dickinson.edu.