4 Bridging the gap between language for general purposes and language for work: An intensive Superior-level language/skill course for teachers, translators, and interpreters

Claudia Angelelli and Christian Degueldre

A person decides to become a language learner for a variety of reasons: to be able to read the literature of a given language in its original form, to travel and discover other cultures, to obtain a better understanding of the world, to meet people and be able to understand them, to increase business opportunities, to exchange ideas with colleagues and friends, to communicate better across language barriers. For most people, the goal is to be able to communicate. Others put their language knowledge at the center of their profession and become language teachers, translators, interpreters, or members of the diplomatic corps of their country.

The courses described here1 were developed by the authors and taught at the Monterey Institute of International Studies from 1994 through 2000, following a 1993 pilot course in French. Since even Superior-level language learners encounter difficulties in using their language in a professional environment, the Spanish and French Summer Intensive Bridge courses were conceived with the goal of developing the proficiency needed to work professionally in the fields of teaching, translation, and interpreting. This goal differentiates them from Advanced-level summer courses for language enhancement (e.g., summer courses in Spanish universities for English-speaking teachers of Spanish).

The initial objectives were to bring students who had been accepted into the two-year Master’s program to the proficiency level necessary to perform in the Translation and Interpreting (T&I) MA program and to offer professionals in the T&I fields the opportunity to enhance their foreign language abilities. Although many incoming students had lived in a country where their foreign

The authors thank William Hopkins and Catherine Ingold for their comments on an earlier version of this chapter. Their remarks served to inform the revision; any discrepancies that remain are our own.

1 At some points in this chapter, features of the Spanish program are described, at other times features of the French program. Both programs contain all the features described for each of them. The various features are not described twice for lack of space.
language was spoken before they applied for admission to the T&I program, they had since had limited opportunity to maintain the foreign language at the same degree of proficiency achieved there. The goal, then, was to restore students’ previous proficiency, improve lexical and structural precision and knowledge of the linguistic system, and develop the ability to perform at a Superior or Distinguished (SD) proficiency level even when under pressure.

However, from the very beginning, the possibility of a different course orientation became evident. To respond to students’ desire to develop their language professionally, be it to teach, interpret, or translate, the courses evolved rapidly to include practical work on techniques and abilities that characterize the professional use of a language. The linguistic components were retained and complemented by others more pertinent to the T&I field. In this sense, the Bridge courses emphasized not only the skills needed to translate or interpret but also such other skills as analysis, active listening, reformulation of ideas—all within a monolingual environment. In this way, the Bridge course evolved to have a twofold goal for students: increased foreign language proficiency and acquisition of professional T&I tools. These goals can be replicated in diverse settings, wherever languages are used professionally at the SD level. Thus, the terms translators and interpreters used in this chapter can easily be replaced by language professionals, language teachers, diplomats, foreign language lawyers, and the like.

The students

The Bridge courses were simultaneously conceived as Superior-level language courses and as introductory courses in the skills of translation and interpreting. These goals were established to meet the needs of a very specific student body that planned to apply the results of language study to the demanding T&I professions. The skills, themselves, however, once acquired, provided students with the basis for working in any number of language-based professions.

Profile of Bridge students

Over time, the student body expanded beyond its original scope to include teachers, already-employed translators, and other professionals.

The participants were probably among the very best in their language class at the college level. Some were proficient in as many as four languages. Most had studied languages for many years, beginning in junior high school. Some were heritage speakers. One common feature was that all students realized that they needed more work on languages professionally.

The students had diverse backgrounds. Spanish classes were English majors, among them K students, and Mexican and Cubans.

Students’ learning experiences varied. Some students had usually learn Spanish in a classroom and traditional methods: the Grammar-Translation Method (ALM). These students had an environment where grammar was the focus of “traditional” studies with heritage language majors. Some were bilingual in their interest in languages. As a group, they were interested in their heritage languages and the professional classes of the other authors in this volume of an optimum learning environment.

Language needs

Students interested in becoming professional translators or interpreters at the Bridge course at the beginning of the admission process, all students had to take a test to determine whether they needed proficiency in foreign language studies. The requirement for a foreign language proficiency and language content was the same for all courses. Currently, determining the proficiency level for the Bridge course is done with the help of the professor assessing the student. Bridge-course students had a foreign language proficiency test of Advanced level. They had to pass this test before they could take part in the Bridge course.

(B zadés and Geoffrion-Vinci [1998])

2 The term heritage speakers (HS) refers to speakers who have been exposed to the target language in the home and have not necessarily studied it or used it in an academic setting.

3 The EDT consists of five parts: a 10-minute interview, a 2-page essay in English, a 300-word essay in Spanish, a 2-page essay in English, and a 2-page essay in Spanish. The EDT is scored on a 1 to 5 scale.

4 Although a foreign language proficiency test is required for admission to the Bridge program, the decision to accept a student is based on their test scores. Interpreters are also interviewed to determine their proficiency level.
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professionally.
The students had diverse backgrounds. Most of the students in the French
and Spanish classes were English-speaking Americans. Some also came from
other countries, among them Kuwait, Spain, Ghana, Kenya, Canada (French
students), and Mexico and Cuba (Spanish students).

Students’ learning experiences also varied. Students in the French and
Spanish classes had usually learned their foreign language through textbooks
and such traditional methods as grammar—translation or the Audio-Linguual
Method (ALM). These students were accustomed to a teacher-centered learning
environment where grammar occupied center stage. Others combined formal
“traditional” studies with heritage traditions. Not all students were college
language majors. Some were biology or physics majors with a minor or keen
interest in languages. As a group, they were eager to learn and demanding in
their expectations of teacher competence, preparation, and individualization.
Both of these characteristics are in keeping with the student traits reported by
the other authors in this volume. All of these elements contributed to the creation
of an optimum learning environment.

Language needs

Students interested in becoming translators and interpreters usually enrolled
in the Bridge course at the behest of the school’s administration. During the
admission process, all students take an Early Diagnostic Test (EDT)³ to deter-
mine whether their level of foreign language proficiency is sufficient for T&I
studies. The requirement for admission is an “acceptable level” of language
proficiency and language control (consistent lexical precision and structural
accuracy). Currently, determination of what constitutes this level is made by
the professor assessing the EDT.⁴

Bridge-course students had often achieved language proficiency beyond the
Advanced level. They had a solid command of grammar of the foreign language.
They also had well-developed comprehension skills and a good understanding
of the culture; they could take part in general conversations. In other words, their

(Valdés and Geoffrion-Vinci [1998]). Sometimes HS need to further develop the formal register
that is acquired through academic studies and which they will need for professional work.
³ The EDT consists of five parts for students with one foreign language: a 150-word translation
from English to the foreign language; a 150-word translation from the foreign language to
English; a 300-word essay in English; a 300-word essay in the foreign language; and an abstract
in English of a 2-page English text. In 1996, an oral component was added for admission to the
MA program.
⁴ Although a foreign language testing expert assisted with test design and guidelines for test ad-
ministration and scoring, the decision whether or not a given student needed to be recommended
for the Bridge program was made by professional interpreters/interpreters (not Oral Proficiency
Interview [OPI] certified foreign language testers) who applied their own judgment and experi-
ence in assessing test outcomes.
strategic, discourse, and sociolinguistic competence was high. However, they experienced difficulty in using the foreign language in, for example, a political or scientific discussion, when they had to be highly accurate and grammatically correct, and when nuances matter. When that happened, they felt their level of proficiency was not sufficient, and, indeed, their level of linguistic proficiency (as measured by lexical precision and grammatical sophistication) was not yet well developed to handle Distinguished-level tasks. (At the beginning of the Bridge course, many students frequently commented that they “used to be better” and were “losing their language.”) They were, in fact, realizing the difference between language for general purposes, for which an Advanced level of proficiency is sufficient and language for professional purposes, for which a Superior (and often, in the case of T&I, even a Distinguished) level of proficiency is required. Put another way, they were moving from proficiency, or potential for real-life application, to performance, or actual job use (Child, Clifford, and Lowe [1993]), and that is precisely the “bridge” that the courses described here provided for them.

Skills
Students in the Bridge course acquired professional skills in a monolingual (immersion) mode. In this way, they enhanced their general foreign language proficiency as they worked on T&I skills.

Although few studies have been conducted on what specific skills are needed for T&I (Gerver [1976]; Gile [1995]), most professional translators and interpreters, as well as teachers in T&I programs, agree that the following skills are essential: linguistic competence (including accuracy); sensitivity to register; broad general knowledge; cultural competence (including cultural sensitivity and the ability to be a “cultural bridge”); analytical skills (e.g., active listening and the understanding of cause and effect relationships, subordination of ideas, and anticipation of what comes next in the discourse); quickness (or the mental agility to hear a message and instantly re-express it in the other language); memory (as a complement to note-taking, as well as for recall of terminology learned in preparation); an ability to abstract meaning from words (including reading between the lines and being able to handle culturally complex and idiosyncratically composed texts, which Child [1987, 1998] calls “Projective Mode”);

ability to conceptualize (to create a mental representation of the ideas and concepts of the original message); public speaking and writing skills (translators often become de facto writers and co-authors); superior presentation;

Bridging the gap

and flexibility (a form of quickness that those who display the “ability to thrive in non-optimal work situations” [March 28, 2001]). 6 Other skills that translators must have a natural tendency to help people. Since amounts of time accomplishing must have an inquisitive mind (and at the same time deal

Affective variables
Like Dabars and Kagan (this volume), presence of affective filters. People can become crucial elements in many stress. Therefore, teaching a positive atmosphere and a teaching

The program

History
The first Bridge course (French) who wanted to become translators was in 1989. A decision was made to include Spanish, and then Japanese. Table 4.1 summarizes the origin to 2000. As the table shows, with the largest student population of Korean students. French and Sp

5 Child (1987, 1990, 1998) presents a text typology constructed from four levels, increasing in difficulty from Novice/Intermediate through Distinguished levels of complexity: orientational (texts that are bound to the external, concrete environment), instructive (texts that transmit factual information), evaluative (texts that respond to actual or perceived reality), and projective (texts that exemplify some unique aspect of the originator’s thought).

6 The Department of Defense (DoD) has a Language Analyst (skills, performance, researcher, interpretive analyst, personal communication, Rende Me: 1990) in charge of the American Defense Language and Foreign Language courses. The idea was to provide a parallel to the translation and interpretation courses that are offered at the university level. The courses were designed to be as realistic as possible, with a focus on practical skills such as translation, interpretation, and language analysis.

7 It should be noted that some faculty members felt that the SD-level was a parallel to the experiences reported in other cases, faculty felt that the SD-level was a parallel to the experiences reported in other cases. Here, Lang and colleagues designed a parallel to the experiences reported in other cases.
Bridging the gap

and flexibility (a form of quickness characteristic of “adaptive performers” – those who display the “ability to adjust behaviors, focus concentration, and thrive in non-optimal work situations” [personal communication, Renée Meyer, March 28, 2001]). Other skills might be added to the list. Interpreters and translators must have a natural curiosity, as well as the desire to communicate and to help people. Since interpreters and translators spend immense amounts of time accomplishing terminological research and preparation, they must have an inquisitive mind (Finlay [1971]). They must strive for perfection (and at the same time deal with the frustration of knowing they cannot reach it).

Affective variables

Like Dabars and Kagan (this volume), Bridge-course instructors noticed the presence of affective filters. Personality factors that get diluted in a regular course can become crucial elements in an intensive course, with its accompanying stress. Therefore, teachers worked to lower these filters by creating a positive atmosphere and a teaching approach of coaching and facilitating.

The program

History

The first Bridge course (French) started in 1993 as a pilot. It had five students who wanted to become translators and/or interpreters. That course was highly successful, and a decision was made to expand the program to applicants in other languages. Spanish was added in 1994, later English and, on an ad hoc basis, Russian and Japanese. Table 4.1 shows the attendance of Bridge courses from their origin to 2000. As the reader will notice, the English course was the one with the largest student population, combining mainly Chinese, Japanese, and Korean students. French and Spanish enrollments remained stable during this

6 The Department of Defense (DoD) has developed an eight-dimensional model for the High-End Language Analyst (skills, performance, knowledge): linguist, cultural expert, target expert, modern researcher, interpretive analyst, performance expert, master teacher, and adaptive performer (personal communication, Renée Meyer, March 28, 2001).

7 It should be noted that some faculty felt that students should arrive with Level-4 skills. In some other cases, faculty felt that SD-level proficiency cannot be taught. This latter assumption finds a parallel in the experiences reported by other authors in this volume, in their case the implicit assumption that foreign language cannot be taught at the SD level but must come only from studying and living abroad. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the preponderance of Russian programs over those in commonly taught languages at the SD level reflects this belief; Spanish, French, and German programs could rely on Advanced students going abroad and returning at the Superior level whereas Russia was closed to Americans during the Cold War so that the higher levels of proficiency by necessity had to be developed in the classroom. Thus, Russian teachers were less likely to believe that high levels of language could not be taught in the classroom.
Table 4.1

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<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>Spanish</td>
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<td>English</td>
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<td>Russian</td>
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<td>Japanese</td>
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</table>

Statistics provided by the Registrar of Academic Records from the Monterey Institute of International Studies.

Bridging the gap

instructors with those qualifications put together a team to teach the course. This approach worked. When we considered how to handle the other areas of our language skills we needed to focus on, it was indeed, essential to the implementation of the student-centered coaching abilities to use the language in a way that was not only effective but also engaging.

Curriculum

The Bridge-course curriculum needs assessment that determines Phase Two was the actual impetus to the creation of the curriculum. This was essential for the development of the curriculum. Table 4.2 illustrates some of the language proficiency levels.

Curricular objectives

Results of the needs assessment between Spanish and the other courses for the Bridge courses differed from that of the other courses. The same curriculum was used for both courses. Table 4.2 illustrates some shared elements.

Each language professor segmented the number and content of units, which are then applied to the course duration: eight weeks of instruction.

Implementation of the curriculum

Initial testing for Spanish

During the first five years, this course was not available to the students. During this time, there was an attempt to add this course to the Bridge program. After the Spanish Bridge course had been tested, and the feedback was collected, the course was implemented. The ultimate enrollment in the T&I program was 9.

8 Hilary James, Bridge course – Spanish Language
9 In 1998, the Bridge course became an integral part of the T&I program.
instructors with those qualifications and, many times, the best solution was to put together a team to teach the course.

This approach worked. When asked what they considered the most valuable aspect of the Bridge course, students commonly replied that it was “the professors...they are professionals in the field and know just what aspects of our language skills we need to focus on.” The selection of appropriate faculty was, indeed, essential to the implementation of the type of program described here: student-centered coaching aimed at developing the skills, knowledge, and abilities to use the language in a professional environment.

Curriculum

The Bridge-course curriculum was established in two phases. Phase One was a needs assessment that determined the curricular objectives and course design. Phase Two was the actual implementation of the Bridge courses, which evolved over time.

Curricular objectives

Results of the needs assessment revealed shared requirements as well as differences between Spanish and French. In this sense, the approach to developing the Bridge courses differed from that of the regular courses in T&I, where all languages follow the same curriculum regardless of language-unique features. Table 4.2 illustrates some shared objectives.

Each language professor segmented the core curriculum into different units. The number and content of units varied by language. The common element was course duration: eight weeks at 22.5 hours a week for a total of 180 hours of instruction.

Implementation of the Bridge courses

Initial testing for Spanish

During the first five years, this course was optional for incoming T&I students. During this time, there was a Spanish test in place to assure that the applicants to the Spanish Bridge course had the right linguistic level (Superior) to benefit from it, although an occasional Advanced-level applicant was admitted. Applicants to the Bridge course were tested orally and in writing. A telephonic ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages) OPI constituted the

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8 Hilary James, Bridge course—Spanish 2000.
9 In 1998, the Bridge course became mandatory for candidates accepted to the MA program, with the remaining enrollment in the T&I program contingent upon successful completion of the summer Bridge course.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Linguistic</td>
<td>(1) Perform comparative analysis of similarities and differences between F/S and English grammar systems.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2) Achieve vocabulary enhancement (field-specific).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sociolinguistic</td>
<td>(1) Gain exposure to different accents and language varieties used in the regions where F/S is spoken.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(2) Raise awareness in switching oral and written discourse from a formal to an informal register and vice versa.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Psycholinguistic</td>
<td>(1) Understand the concept of multitasking and split attention.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(2) Gain information-processing skills in a monolingual mode.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time management</td>
<td>(1) Learn how to prioritize among tasks.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(2) Develop organizational skills to meet tight deadlines and to perform under pressure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information processing</td>
<td>(1) Distinguish between main idea and subordinate ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2) Understand connections between ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>(1) Understand how to do terminology searches.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2) Become familiar with monolingual sources in F/S.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

oral test. The written test consisted of reading comprehension, vocabulary, and grammar sections. The reading comprehension section used general/scientific readings that paralleled in difficulty those used in the first two weeks of the course. The vocabulary section required applicants to define terms in their own words and to give synonyms and antonyms. The grammar section asked applicants to choose between options for ten items and justify their choice. For example, one item asked if the position of the adjective was correct and if so why:

Número 8:

a) Las hermosas playas de Venezuela atraen a muchos turistas.  
(The beautiful beaches of Venezuela attract many visitors.)

b) Las playas hermosas de Venezuela atraen a muchos turistas.  
(The beautiful beaches of Venezuela attract many visitors.)

Understanding the position. Intermediate High/Advanced and it is common for students of only after the noun. In item 8a, students were passed, students were added.

Spanish course syllabus

The Spanish course consisted of aductory one. Unit themes inch Skills, (2) Science, (3) Technical, (7) Translation/Interpreting/Te approximately 22 hours, although The only exception was Unit C

Spanish Bridge-courses

The Spanish Bridge course w reader, a grammar reference m the mandatory texts for the course. The reader contained artic laries, book chapters, etc., illus collection of videos and audi tap where students could check on comprehension exercises or w. Students were asked to locate (e.g., OEA: Organización de 1 from various Spanish-speaking documents served a dual purpose (e.g., political speeches, organ discourse input for language content areas. Materials were specialized terms from them, indicating country and registe in Spain refers to unemployn their glossaries, students sho of use.

The grammar reference ma are generally reduced to simp students’ acquisition of Span the reference manual’s descri
Understanding the position of adjectives in Spanish discriminates between Intermediate High/Advanced and Superior students. At lower proficiency levels, it is common for students of Spanish to assume that adjectives are placed only after the noun. In item 8, both positions are correct, but they have different meanings. Item 8a states that all beaches in Venezuela are beautiful. Item 8b, by positioning the adjective behind the noun, indicates that not all beaches are beautiful. Some are, and some are not. Once the tests and EDI were passed, students were admitted to the course. Then the 180-hour journey began.

**Spanish course syllabus**
The Spanish course consisted of eight units: seven topical units and an introductory one. Unit themes included (1) Linguistic and Information-Processing Skills, (2) Science, (3) Technology, (4) Economics, (5) Politics, (6) Law, and (7) Translation/Interpreting/Teaching. The time assigned for each unit was approximately 22 hours, although they varied in content and degree of complexity. The only exception was Unit One.

**Spanish Bridge-course materials**
The Spanish Bridge course was taught with current authentic materials. A reader, a grammar reference manual, and two books (a play and a novel) were the mandatory texts for the course.

The reader contained articles from newspapers, journals, scientific magazines, book chapters, etc., illustrating each of the topical units. A large collection of videos and audiotapes was made available through the media center where students could check out audio materials with accompanying listening-comprehension exercises or watch videos in preparation for class discussion. Students were asked to locate the official web pages of various organizations (e.g., OEA: Organización de Estados Americanos) and electronic documents from various Spanish-speaking countries. These web pages and electronic documents served a dual purpose: they provided the context for the topical units (e.g., political speeches, organization by-laws), and they served as authentic discourse input for language in the sciences, law, politics, and other specific content areas. Materials were classified thematically, and students extracted specialized terms from them, on the basis of which they compiled glossaries, indicating country and register. For example, in a political text, the term paro in Spain refers to unemployment, whereas in Argentina it means strike. In their glossaries, students showed both meanings and indicated the country of use.

The grammar reference manual problematized grammatical concepts that are generally reduced to simple rules at the beginning/intermediate stages of students’ acquisition of Spanish. For example, students were asked to read the reference manual’s description of the use of the subjunctive mood. Then
they were exposed to appearances of the subjunctive in authentic discourse (e.g., newspaper articles, speeches) and were encouraged to explore the similarities and differences between rules and usage.

A play and a novel were used to generate class discussions. The genre was chosen for affective reasons. Most students in American colleges are exposed to literary genre when they study a foreign language. So, using literature in the Bridge courses provided students with a sense of familiarity and security. The goal here, though, was not to perform literary analysis. Rather, the readings provided a basis for generating discussions and practicing discourse devices such as presenting and supporting an opinion, organizing an argument in linguo-culturally appropriate ways, persuading, capitalizing, and other elements of discourse competence expected at the SD level.

The play, *La barca sin pescador* ("A Boat without a Fisherman"), by Alejandro Casona, was the less demanding literary selection in terms of language. Since the play is based on universals of good and evil, most students were already familiar with the ideas and vocabulary, and it was easy for them to engage in class discussions. The play is divided into three acts, and it was used during the first three weeks of class.

The novel selected was *El amor en tiempos de cólera* (Love in the Time of Cholera) by Gabriel García Márquez. Even if college students have read works by Márquez, they are generally more familiar with *Cien años de Soledad* (100 Years of Solitude). *El amor en tiempos de cólera* is rarely read in Spanish in undergraduate programs. Once again, the focus with this material was not literary analysis but summarizing, expressing opinion, contextualizing, and comparing.

In addition to these books, students chose another two that they presented to the class individually. During these presentations, students worked on individual presentational objectives as they became experts on the chosen titles that they presented to their peers.

**Representative Bridge-course activities**

Every activity in the French and Spanish Bridge courses integrated a variety of abilities: reading, research, preparation, presentation, and the like. For example, the fourth week of the program in 2000 was dedicated to Science and Technology. This theme is obviously very broad and cannot be covered in just a few days (or 22.5 contact hours). The goal was to expose students to a more sophisticated terminology and more difficult concepts, for which they needed to do more research and read more reference/parallel documents. Topics included pollution and the protection of the environment, fish of the Amazon River, a car commercial with technical specifications, and energy-saving policies, among others.

During the “Science” week, students concentrated on scientific topics. For example, six to seven contact hours were devoted to the topic of marine biology and marine mammals (a topic that boasts the country’s largest aqua life by listening to a tape, preparational articles, preparing glossaries, and served as an excellent issue. For example, the interest in the fishing industry is an emotive and served as an excellent issue.

The instructor also used less structured activities to reinforce the acquisition of material. A lesson plan for marine biology contained three comprehen. These included a set of tasks assessing a field trip to the Monterey Bay.

The first activity required students to search the California area. In the case of a documentary from the Belgian N... describes the life of whales and... The objective for students was to find the names of sea creatures and make about 110 words per minute. The visual aids that accompanied the lesson were the use of new terminology and the documentary, they completed activities were typical listening exercises. Other activities included the activation of T&I, including the activation of media for students, received a list of questions pertinent in the video as they did. After students had identified the discussion of content. Students were asked to verify their comprehens...

For example, some presented summaries, students used the text of persuasion, description, and