

Waging Peace with Non-European Languages and their Speakers - China and Others

Merryl Kravitz (Lithuania 2001)

Biography

Dr. Merryl Kravitz is a Professor of Education at New Mexico Highlands University, a small comprehensive Hispanic-serving institution. She teaches courses in Secondary and Language Education and is currently Interim Coordinator of Field Experiences. She holds a Ph.D. in Educational Linguistics from the University of New Mexico (UNM) and completed her undergraduate and master's programs in Linguistics/Anthropology from SUNY Binghamton and UNM, respectively. With a passion for languages and cultures, she volunteered at the United Nations school and studied abroad in Guadalajara, Mexico, always dreaming of becoming a Fulbright scholar. She achieved that dream in 2001 when she taught English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and Applied Linguistics at Vilnius Pedagogical University in Lithuania. There she taught undergraduate classes in conversational English and Varieties of English for undergraduates and directed inquiry on language and society by graduate students in Sociolinguistics.

The Fulbright mission remains a critical component of Merryl's life. She has served on the Board of the New Mexico chapter of the Fulbright Association since 2002 and is currently Vice President of the chapter. She is delighted to have the opportunity to address issues in teaching of non-European languages in the US and EFL for speakers of those languages with her peers at this conference.

Background

Most students of culture will agree that language and culture are inextricably entwined. Languages carry meanings and understandings that characterize their speakers. This roundtable is designed to address language issues from two perspectives. As Fulbrighters, part of our responsibility is to serve as ambassadors and to help achieve international understanding. How can we promote the teaching of non-European languages in American schools and universities, thereby creating greater cross-cultural understanding?

From the international perspective, how can we support English language instruction in non-European countries such as China where interest is high but native speakers are typically unavailable? Can we utilize technology to compensate for the paucity of native English speakers in these countries?

Specific areas of discussion include the politics of language teaching and the improvement of language pedagogy to ensure real world language competency both in the United States and abroad.

Discussions Questions

1. As Fulbrighters, how can we promote the teaching of non-European languages in American schools and universities?
2. What are the political, social, cultural, pedagogical and linguistic barriers to teaching non-European languages in our schools?
3. How can we support English language instruction in non-European countries such as China where interest is high but native speakers are typically unavailable?
4. How can we utilize technology to compensate for the paucity of native English speakers in these countries?
5. What role can Fulbright and Fulbrighters play in the training of teachers for programs in non-European languages and EFL for speakers of those languages?