

Spanish and Yucatec Mayan Languages

by Stephanie Zehner

Standards

- IL.28 GOAL: Use the target language to communicate within and beyond the classroom setting.
- IL.28.A STANDARD: Understand oral communication in the target language.
- IL.28.C.4b > Demonstrate understanding of written materials by organizing information and concepts (e.g., outlines, flow charts).
- IL.28.C.4c > Compare the target language with one or more languages in terms of vocabulary, word use, phrase and sentence structure and complete text structures.
- IL.28.C.5c > Explain how various languages are interrelated in terms of word origin and text structures.
- IL-PTS.1.I P: TCT designs learning experiences to promote student skills in the use of technologies appropriate to the discipline.
- IRA.5.7 ...use instructional and information technologies to support literacy learning

Resources

[Yucatec Maya Pronunciation and Everyday Phrases](#)

A website found on the Library of Congress home page.

Overview and Rationale

In this lesson students will be learning bits and pieces of a third language. Students at the high school level may find this very interesting, especially since they will be able to brag about speaking a Mayan language that is rarely heard, especially in the United States. While researching the Mayan language, students will complete a chart by writing out the phonetics of some Mayan letters. They will also have to write a Spanish word with a similar sound. This serves as a great review of previous material. Students will remember how they first learned the Spanish pronunciation of words and also think of a Spanish word that has a similar sound, encouraging them to think about all of the words

they have learned so far. Another important component of this lesson is having the students see and hear the similarities between the Spanish and Mayan cultures.

Objectives

The students will be able to compare and contrast the Spanish and Yucatec Mayan languages. The students will be able to pronounce basic greetings and phrases in Yucatec Mayan.

Materials

- computer lab (each student will use their own computer)
- Mayan phonetics worksheet

Procedure

To begin this lesson, I will review with the students what we learned the previous day about the Mayan languages, the quetzal bird, and the houses in Guatemala. Afterwards I will introduce what they will be researching today in the computer lab. The students will be given a chart with three columns (see graphic organizer). The first column will have 7 Mayan letters (a, e, i, o, oo, u, and x). In the next column, the students will have to write the phonetics of each letter so that they know how each letter is pronounced. This will be written for them on the website. In the final column, the students will have to write a Spanish word with a similar sound. After they finish their chart, I will have them read the basic phrases given in the Mayan languages. The website writes each in both Yucatec Mayan and English. I will say each first and have the students repeat. Then I will call on students to speak to each other. For example, I will call on one student and tell him/her to ask another student "how are you?" in the Mayan language and have the other student respond with the response given on the website. I will do this with each phrase listed on the website. Then I will pair the students up to practice each phrase with each other. I will walk around and listen to their conversations. They must complete the entire conversation by reading it from the website. Memorizing the phrases is not necessary. After giving them some practice time, I will have them go to each group and have them say the conversation for me so that I can determine if they are pronouncing it correctly and help correct any errors.

To accommodate for students with disabilities and/or special needs, I will write the phonetic sounds for each Mayan letter on their sheet. I will also help them (or have the special education teacher assist) by saying the sound of each letter for them and having them repeat it. Then I will give them a choice of 2 Spanish words and have them select the word that most resembles the same sound as the Mayan letter.

Assessment

I will assess the students based on their completion of the worksheet along with their Yucatec Mayan pronunciation and effort to try the new language. I will have each group say the conversation aloud to me as I grade them on their pronunciation and effort.

Comments

I just found this website from the Library of Congress homepage. Therefore, I have not had an opportunity to use it in my classroom. However, when I use it next year, I think it will be a fun lesson for the students. I always teach them that the more languages they know, the more valuable they will be in society. Some of my students are really starting to appreciate the differences they find in other cultures. I think that this would be a simple and effective way for them to learn about another culture and language and actually get to use it in the classroom. Plus, it goes perfectly with the chapter in this unit since they are learning about Guatemala. They were surprised when they learned that there are other languages used in this country besides Spanish. Not only do they learn something new, but also learn how to speak in one of the other languages!