

UFLA

The Utah Foreign Language Association Newsletter

Volume 107, Issue 3
November, 2022



Stephen Van Orden
UFLA President

Happy Fall Greetings UFLA Friends,

I hope all is going well for you and that you are enjoying your Fall classes. I also hope that you are planning to attend SWCOLT 2023 which UFLA is hosting and which is taking place from February 23-25 at the Marriott Downtown @ City Creek in Salt Lake City (www.swcolt.org). Many of you submitted proposals to present sessions. Thank you!! I know that the SWCOLT Board was excited by the number of proposals they received and that they are even looking into getting more rooms for the conference to accommodate more sessions. This is fantastic! This will be a wonderful venue to share our outstanding Utah programs and practices with our fellow language teachers from the SWCOLT region. We will have an ASL strand and a DLI strand of presentations at the conference. It is looking like there will be great offerings for all of our languages. Early-bird registration ends November 30th, so get started on your registration process. Your district

world language and DLI specialists support your attendance. I believe there is a strong chance that your principal will pay for your conference fees if you talk with them early and explain how valuable this conference will be for you professionally. Invite your colleagues to come. You can even sign up as a department from your institution. I am confident this will be one of the best SWCOLT conferences ever.

In our last newsletter, I invited all of us to take a deep dive into some cultural aspect of the languages we teach and then share what we have learned with our students via classroom communicative activities. I suggested that doing this would help us with burnout and reinvigorate our teaching. Well, I took my own advice and have been taking a deep dive into the Christmas traditions of the Erzgebirge mountains of Saxony, Germany.

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I want to briefly report on how things are going. First some context: the Erzgebirge mountains are in the southern part of Saxony on the Czech border. In the Middle Ages, large silver deposits were discovered there as well as tin, lead, zinc, and later uranium. Because of the boom-and-bust nature of mining, the region experienced periods of prosperity and periods of poverty. When the mining operations were not producing, the people of the region turned to the other main natural resource they had in their small mountain towns, wood. They became expert lathe turners and wood carvers. Over time, most of the folk art they created became associated with Christmas, and today many of the Christmas decorations that we associate with Germany had their origins in the woodshops of the Erzgebirge: nutcrackers (*Nussknacker*), candle towers (*Pyramiden*), incense smokers (*Räuchermännchen*), candle arches (*Schwibbögen*), and other decorations. Today, the region is almost synonymous with Christmas. For many years, the region was behind the Iron Curtain, so the rest of the world largely forgot about it, and we came to associate decorations like the nutcracker with other parts of the world. Since German Reunification 30 plus years ago, the Erzgebirge has been reestablishing itself as the home of many beloved Christmas traditions, and it has become a tourist destination again, particularly during the Christmas season when tourists love to visit the Christmas markets.

This region of Germany is particularly important in my classroom because at Timpview we have a sister school and an ongoing exchange program in Meißen, Saxony which is only 90 minutes or so away from the region. This is part of *our* region of Germany. This year, I want to recreate and live Erzgebirge Christmas traditions with my students. I want create authentic cultural contexts for our classroom communicative interactions. This is an ongoing process, but I can already report several successes. Two weeks ago, we learned about the tradition of the *Engel* and *Bergmann* (angel and miner candle holders). In the Erzgebirge, people put an *Engel* for each female member of the family and a *Bergmann* for each male member of the family in the living room window during the Christmas season. All of the women are angels, and all of the men are miners. At night the candles are lit which traditionally served as a reminder to the miners returning from the mines that all was well with their families at home. In class, we engaged in a role play about buying an *Engel* and *Bergmann* set at a Christmas folk art store in the Erzgebirge town of Seiffen. Then we made our own out of craft wood and wooden beads. The students' creations are now on display in the showcase in the Timpview World Language Hall.



Engel and Bergmann crafts on display

We are also building this tradition into our plans for our Christmas choir. Each year we put together a German choir for Christmas and perform at the Salt Lake City Christmas market. The students love the tradition, and we usually have 100 plus students who sing in the choir. This year, we are going to sing a song about the *Engel* and *Bergmann* in the Erzgebirge dialect at the market on December 2. We are also building the tradition of Russian Horns into our concert. Russian Horns are natural horns (without valves) that play only one note. In the Erzgebirge, Russian Horn choirs play Christmas music kind of like a bell choir. Each person in the group plays their note when it comes up in the music (You can watch a video of the cultural practice at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DaetqHLYMZ8>). As a part of my deep dive into Erzgebirge Christmas traditions, I built Russian horns that my students will play as a part of our concert. Just last Friday, I distributed the horns to my students who volunteered to be in the group. I had so many volunteers, over 25, that I had to build three more horns over the weekend. The students are so excited to learn the music. I have also made contact with the leader of two music groups who play Russian Horns as a part of their Christmas programs. They are excited that American German learners are interested in their culture. I could go on and continue to describe more Erzgebirge-focused activities that I am planning for the Christmas season, but I think you already have a good feel for the project. Just let me add that I got a *Deutsch Macht Spaß* (given out yearly for fun projects) grant for \$500 from AATG. I also got a \$500 grant from the Provo Foundation (given out yearly for innovative teacher projects) to help with the costs of building the instruments and creating miner costumes. When we are finished with our activities, I plan to create a teaching unit with the Erzgebirge-focused communicative, practice, and cultural activities that we have been and will be doing. I will share the unit with other German teachers and propose a session about my project for a future UFLA Conference.



Timpview students try on costumes and pose with Russian Horns

There has been a lot that has gone into my project. Some of it has been percolating in my mind for years. I have been progressing as a teacher over the years to the point where I wanted to do this and had the ability and resources to do it. I wouldn't have been interested in this project 25

years ago, but it was inspiring and exciting for me now. Because I am excited, my students are too.

I hope that you have also been able to take a deep dive into some aspect of culture and that you are sharing or will share it with your students. If you haven't taken my challenge from the last newsletter, I reiterate it here:

Start a new project. Take an aspect of culture or language that you have always wanted to learn more about. Take a deep dive into that aspect of language and culture. Re-become a bright-eyed, fascinated language learner (even if you are a native speaker). Find authentic resources on the Internet. Read, watch, and listen. Make connections. Join a community. Become an expert in this aspect of culture or language and let it grow into a passion.

As your new understanding begins to flourish, you will have an intense desire to share what you have learned with your students. Create activities and curriculum. Develop a new unit. Create materials to use with your beginning students. Create materials to use with your more advanced students. Let the flame of your fire spread to your students. Your students *will* come alive—inspired by your passion. They will then reflect more positive energy back at you increasing a continually building momentum.

Another version of this would be to find a colleague or a group of colleagues and collaborate on your project.

Maybe your project needs some financial support. Apply for a UFLA Vitality award or a Pat Buckner Collaborative Award. Your AATs probably offer grants for projects as well. Some schools also use some of their Trust Land funds for teacher projects. Ask an administrator for money. Try a Go-Fund-Me campaign. Don't stop until you get the resources you need.

And then, when you have completed your project, share it with UFLA. Present a session at UFLA about your project. [. . .] If you feel more comfortable writing about your project, write up a short article, and submit it for our newsletter. The newsletter can always use more submissions (UFLA Spring Newsletter 2022).

I hope that my experience and my invitation resonate in some way with you. We all love language and culture. We want to pass our passion on to our students. I think that this is one way to reinvigorate that passion in our hearts and spread it to our students.

I can't wait to see you at SWCOLT! I am so proud to be associated with the great teachers and professionals of UFLA.

Stephen Van Orden
UFLA President

SWCOLT Information

Come experience

**SWCOLT
2023**

February 23-25

UTAH



Life & Languages Elevated

Location: Marriott City Creek,
Salt Lake City, Utah



Southwest Conference on Language Teaching

Utah Foreign Language Association

<https://www.swcolt.org/> <https://ufla.net/>



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Language Association



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GET READY
FOR

SWCOLT 2023
SALT LAKE CITY, UT
FEBRUARY 23-25

www.swcolt.org/

Early bird registration ends Nov. 30th

UFLA News

EXPERIENCE *Utah*

ELEVATE YOUR SWCOLT 2023 EXPERIENCE!



Nature

Bonneville Salt Flats
Hogle Zoo
Loveland Living Planet Aquarium
Spiral Jetty
5 National Parks
9+ Ski Resorts



City

Breweries, Distilleries & an Exciting Nightlife
University of Utah
Utah State Capitol Building
Utah Jazz Basketball
World Class Shopping & Dining
Park City



Art & History

Golden Spike National Historic Park
Musicals, Theater and Concerts
Thanksgiving Point Museums and Garden
This is the Place Heritage Park
Utah Museum of Natural History
Church History Museum



JOIN US!

EARLY REGISTRATION: NOV. 30TH

www.swcolt.org



UFLA News

UFLA needs YOU

To find out more about how to become more involved in our UFLA organization, complete this survey. (click here)



Would you like to nominate a Teacher of the Year? As a reminder, applications are accepted on our website at ufla.net.

In addition to [Teacher of the Year](#), UFLA also awards the following grants:

[Teacher Vitality Grant](#)

[Pat Buckner Collaboration Grant](#)

UFLA also offers additional awards for Lifetime Achievement and Friend of the Profession. If you would like to submit a name for consideration of either of these awards, you just need to send a nomination to the UFLA president.

UFLA Mission

The Utah Foreign Language Association exists to promote the learning of world languages and cultures in the state of Utah and beyond. Specifically, the mission of UFLA is to:

- Support world language teaching and acquisition at all academic levels, including traditional instruction and dual language immersion programs
- Disseminate information and provide opportunities for the exchange of ideas and resources to support language teaching and learning
- Offer professional development opportunities for language teachers
- Recognize excellence in language teaching and learning
- Collaborate with regional and national language teaching organizations
- Advocate for public policy that promotes language learning and supports the needs of language teachers and students

UFLA WEBSITE

The UFLA Website has now moved to <http://ufla.net>

It's a new name, but with all the content we have always had on the site. If you only visit once a year to register for the conference, come see what else we have on ufla.net (including copies of the newsletters going back over twenty years.) We will also post handouts from presentations at our upcoming conference on the new UFLA website.

We also hope you will join [UFLA on Facebook](#) and on our new Instagram account ([@ufla_utah](#)). Come participate in the conversation!



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Advertising Information

The UFLA Newsletter is published three times each year in September, January and May. All issues are distributed via e-mail to UFLA members as well as posted on the UFLA website.

Advertising rates are available at:
[UFLA Sponsorship Opportunities](#)

Contact Branden Lansing at blansing@dsdmail.net with any questions or to place an ad.