

# **Capturing Students' Target Language Exposure Collaboratively, on Video – The Akan (Twi) Example**

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## **Abstract:**

The video project at the center of this paper is one of the strategies the author has been utilizing in teaching Akan as a foreign language aimed at reinforcing aspects of Akan covered in a given semester, specifically as students transition through different levels of language instruction and acquisition or go home on vacation. The significance of this project lies in the fact that it promotes language documentation and material development in less-documented languages, and also, in the fact that it gives foreign language learners the opportunity to reinforce their target language exposure on vacation, or as they transition through the different levels of study, because each student gets a copy of the video to watch with their communities outside of the classroom.

## **1. Introduction**

The non-availability of videos for teaching Akan as a second language, coupled with students' inability to retain target language materials, largely as a result of a long school vacation during which they have no access to their new language, are problems that led to this idea of requiring and organizing students each semester to capture much of their language exposure on video. The video at the center of this article is worth sharing because, while there have been countless articles, dissertations (and even books) on the various methods of teaching a foreign language through video (Morris 2000, Steele and Johnson 2000, Rhodes and Pufahl 2004), there have been virtually none on students of less commonly taught, funded, and documented languages working together each semester to document their target language exposure through video. This is particularly true of doing so as a way to address the two main causes of non-retention that were identified above. Anyone who has had my experience of teaching two to four different levels of a foreign language concurrently, especially without the relevant materials, will surely understand

why this has been such a significant project in all of my classes. If done and used well, this project has the tendency to prevent what I have come to describe as “broken lines of communication” between the various levels of language instruction and acquisition. A line of communication between the different levels of instruction is said to be broken when: (a) there is no avenue for the instructor of any continuing level to determine how much of the language materials his/her students have realistically covered at previous levels; or when (b) materials covered at previous levels have no place in subsequent levels; or when (c) instructors of continuing students have a sense of how many materials and which specific topic areas, were covered at previous levels, but their mode of storage does not allow for a quick review. An open line of communication, which presents itself as the absences of any of the above instances, is crucial to successful learning and acquisition in light of the fact that language learning is cumulative.

The video project therefore is about keeping the lines of communication between the different levels of language instruction open by making students live their target language exposure through video, and is a good strategy also for material documentation. This creative usage of the target language requires primarily the knowledge and skills of every learner (Blaz 2002: 74) and, more significantly, the target language instructor’s leadership. Section two provides background on the Akan language, and describes the instructional goals for the level in which the video was made. The project background and aims are given in section three. Section four is an explanation and analysis of the content and contexts of the video project. Section five offers concluding thoughts.

## 2. Language Background, and Class Goals

The term *Akan* has both ethnographic and linguistic usage (Obeng 1987, Ofori 2006a). It is a major language in Ghana (West Africa) – the only indigenous language to have reached the stage of being called a lingua franca. Its main written and studied dialects are *Akuapem Twi*, *Asante Twi* and *Fantse*. Genetically, Akan belongs in the New Kwa group of languages (Williamson and Blench 2000) within the Niger-Congo phylum. Currently, there are seven American uni-

versities that offer instruction in Akan as a foreign language on a regular basis. Among the reasons students have given for studying the language are: (a) to conduct research in/on Ghana; (b) to prepare for study abroad in Ghana; (c) to work for the US government; (d) to experience own culture, in the case of heritage learners; and, (e) to experience other cultures. Communication and culture (Blaz 2002) have been the keystones in meeting these different needs and expectations, which became quite evident as this video project progressed. Following is a summary of the goals for the elementary Akan class in which this video was made.

Students will learn X in class and/or outside of class (by watching, listening to, reading about, discussing, debating, practicing etc. X from authentic, or near authentic source(s)) and understand X; and will be given as see fit ample time to practice X either by speech (i.e. in dialogues, etc.), in writing (by e-mail, letter, in a story, an essay, portfolios, “album/life project” etc.), or otherwise, in a culturally appropriate manner to the point whereby students acquire X mostly fully – in other words, to the point whereby they are able to use or engage X meaningfully and comfortably in (target language's) real-life context(s) or simulation(s) of it/them (e.g. skits, etc.) without any learning aid.

The following textbooks, coupled with my own native experience, have been very useful in meeting these goals: Schleicher (1994), Dolphyne (1996), Kotey (2000), Hadley (2001), Blaz (2002), Hall (2002), Senkoro (2003), Bokamba and Bokamba (2004), Ayelew (2005), and Ofori (2006b). This list is not exhaustive.

### **3. The Video Project: Background, and Goals**

The script for the video project in consideration was written by me for my first-semester Elementary Akan (Twi) class, which took place in 2006; it is based on scripts I had authored previously for students to use in in-class role-play and at language/community events between 2000 and 2005. As already indicated, this project has been

my rational response to my utter dejection as, semester upon semester, my students come back to class after a long vacation or to the next level of language instruction and acquisition having forgotten everything from their previous course. I believe that the projects that this response has engendered has great relevance to the teaching/learning of foreign languages that have little to no instructional/study materials (and/or cultures that are remote to the average American), and possibly little or no relevance to languages and/or cultures that are easily accessible to the average L2 Western student/learner.

Every language teacher has a list of issues and topics to be covered over the course of the semester, specific to the level he or she is teaching. Within each of the topics to be covered, there are very specific elements/items/events the teacher feels that students must master and should not forget for that level. This is necessary if students are going to make any progress through the learning process. Usually, these are the items on which we test our students. The script was therefore written to capture the core items of the course plan for the elementary Akan level. This means that the script, as presented here, is not everything that was covered at this level of instruction.

The aim for writing the script, in the first place, was to connect the different core events and elements together in a meaningful way. The best way to do this is to create a setting – which the video project is an example of – whereby the different events converge, have relevance, and, as a result, interact. This is based upon my conviction that it is easier to remember/retain the different events learned as entities within a system – i.e. as interconnected entities – than as isolated entities. With this approach, a unit has meaning only in the context of those other units with which it interconnects. This means that if meaningful learning is the goal of the level then the learner would have no option but to acquire the different events/items together.

Again, for the final product to be engaging to students, as I have always required in such life-long projects in order to ensure that students revisit them as often as possible, it needs to be about them, to be relevant to them, and to be well-organized and very attractive in content, context and sight. It also needs to be portable and, above

everything, fun to watch. Compared to the other projects I have spearheaded in order to deal with the retention problem, and have subsequently written about, this can be described as the “teacher’s project.” In other words, in this project, the language instructor brings the target language and its socio-cultural context (simulated) to his or her students. The script for the video production was given to students from day one and was structured into “manageable chunks” (Oxford 1990: 45) – or mini-events – to facilitate comprehension and retention. The script was learned as part of materials used for the level/semester that the video was made. There were also outside class meetings devoted strictly to preparing students for the video production. Roles were assigned based on students’ capabilities and comfort levels. I was not just the script writer, but also the producer and the director of the video, since none of my students knew the target language culture as well as I did.

#### 4. The Projects: Description and Analysis of Content

Following is an explanation and/or analysis of the content and contexts of the script that students finally acted out. There were nine students total, all US citizens who were learning Akan (Twi) as a foreign language. The story is set in Ghana with six of the nine students acting as US citizens, and the remaining three acting as Ghanaians. Using their Akan names, the characters were: (i) *Abenaa*; (ii) *Afia*; (iii) *the three Crazy Joggers – Kwasi, Akua and Amma*; (iv) *Yaa Panyin*; (v) *Yaa (Ketewa)*; (vi) *Adwoa*; and (vii) *Akosua* (a dress-seller).

The first six students acted as US citizens and the last three as Ghanaians.<sup>1</sup> Five of the six US citizens in the video – namely Abenaa, Afia, and the three Crazy Joggers – are in Ghana on a study abroad program. Yaa Panyin, the sixth US citizen, is working in Ghana, and is a close friend of Afia. The chief character in the story is Abenaa.

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<sup>1</sup> The Akan people have names according to the day of the week on which one was/is born. Following are the days of the week and names of those born on that day in brackets – the male name is first, and the female name second): Sunday/Kwasiada (Kwasi, Akosua), Monday/Dwoada (Kwadwo, Adwoa), Tuesday/Benada (Kwabena, Abenaa), Wednesday/Wukuada (Kwaku, Akua), Thursday/Yawoada (Yaw, Yaa), Friday/Fiada (Afia, Kofi), Saturday/Memeneda (Kwame, Amma) (Ofori 2006: 6).

According to the story, Abenaa comes from Indianapolis in the US, and is in Ghana visiting. She leaves her residence to go to the University of Ghana campus in Legon. On her way, she visits two friends so that they can teach her how to prepare two Ghanaian dishes. After the cooking, she thanks her friends and goes to the bus stop so that she can continue her trip to the university campus in Legon. At the bus stop, she meets a person she does not know, and later a person she does know. They converse. A seller passes by the bus stop, and Abenaa's friend buys something. The seller leaves the scene, the bus comes, and they go their separate ways. The plot as outlined above has several episodes within it that are revealed in the course of analysis. Interspersing the sub-events are songs meant to also teach the language.

Attention should be paid to the principles that fashioned the document, especially to how matters of applied and general linguistics and the socio-cultural practices of the target language have been neatly woven together in a way that is beneficial as well as attractive to foreign language learners. This is a 30-minute video. To make description and analysis easy, the video/script has been divided into thirteen parts, numbered in upper case letters from (A) to (M), and eleven acts – each act with a heading meant to partially capture events/episodes there-in.

### ***Act I: The Preamble***

(A) The story begins with Abenaa, the chief character of the story, leaving her house to go to the main campus of the University of Ghana in Legon. Legon is a suburb of Accra, the capital city of Ghana. On her way to the campus, she decides to visit two of her friends, Yaa (Ketewa) and Adwoa, so that they can teach her how to prepare two Ghanaian dishes: *Kelewele*, and *dabodabo nkwan* (“duck soup”). Yaa (Ketewa) and Adwoa, according to the story, are Ghanaians. Following is what Abenaa says prior to leaving her house:

- (1) Merekɔ me nnamfo fie akɔsua seneɛ yɛyɛ kelewele.  
*I am going to my friends' house to learn how to prepare Kelewele.*
- (2) Megye di sɛ wobɛyɛ dabodabo nkwan nso.

*I hope that they will prepare duck soup also.*

(B) As Abenaa walks down the path to go to her friends' house, the class sings the following song (3 – 7): *Dabodabo Nkwan yε dε* “Duck soup is delicious.”

(3) *Dabodabo nkwan yε dε. Duck soup is delicious.*

(4) *Ne tiri na εtene [nεtene] nkwan mu. Its head is what gives the soup the most taste.*

(5) *Menya aburokyire a anka mεkɔ (If) I had my way I would go abroad*

(6) *Mankani fufuo asi me kwan. (But my love for) pounded cocoyam has blocked/ is blocking it.*

(7) *Dabodabo nkwan yε dε. Duck soup is indeed delicious.*

*Dabodabo nkwan* is a very popular children's song. Almost every Ghanaian from the rural areas grows up knowing it, and so I thought it would be fun for students to know it as well. Secondly, as simple as the song may seem, it embodies, and was meant to help me teach, some of the most complex sentence structures and sounds in Akan, for example, focus constructions as represented by (4) above. Another of these is the hypothetical sentence represented by (5): *Menya aburokyire a anka mεkɔ* (“(If) I had my way I would go abroad”). The full hypothetical sentence is: *sε menya aburokyire a anka mεka*. The hypothetical unit is: *sε ... a anka ...* (“if ... then ...”). Occurring in each of the dotted spots is a sentence. The word, *sε*, is dropped in the song and in speech. *Asi* (“have/has blocked”) in (6) teaches the perfect construction, and *mεkɔ*, which is a reduced and preferred form of *Me-bε-kɔ* (“I will go”), teaches the future construction. Again, the song teaches pronouns, namely, the first and third person singular pronouns and their short forms: *me-/m-* ‘1SG’ in (5) and (6), and *ne* ‘3SG-possessive’ in (4). The song also captures some of the difficult sounds in the language, such as [kw], [ky], [ny], and [ɛ] (Dolphyne 1988: 29). In addition, students will learn how to say that something is sweet, as in (3) and (7), or to learn to say that something

is not sweet by changing *yε dε* ‘be sweet’ to *nyε dε* ‘is not sweet’ – i.e. by attaching *n-* before *yε*, the verb/copula.<sup>2</sup> These complex structures and sounds are captured at the most memorable junctures of the video, namely, the opening and singing junctures. The content of the song significantly sets the stage for the discussion on cooking in Act IV, during which the characters make the soup.

## *Act II: Paying a Visit*

(C) Abenaa walks down the path to her friends' house as the song continues to be sung. The green grass and the trees on the side of the pavement bring to the story and the learning experience some sense of the natural world. The hope is to create a beautiful scene as Abenaa jumps down the path, with the camera trailing her every move to the door of her friends' house. She knocks on their door. They answer and welcome her inside.

(8) Abenaa: Agoo! *Knocking!*  
 (9) Adwoa ne Yaa: Ame! *Hello!*  
 (10) Adwoa: Ei! Abenaa. *Hey! Abenaa*  
 (11) Abenaa: Ei! Adwoa, ei! Yaa. *Hey! Adwoa, hey! Yaa*  
 (11/i) Mema mo akye.  
 (11/ii) Adwoa ne Yaa: Yaa nua.  
 (11/iii) Abenaa: Mo ho te sɛn? *How are you (pl.)?*  
 (12) Adwoa ne Yaa: Yɛn ho yɛ. Na wo nso ɛ?  
 (13) Abenaa: Me ho yɛ paa. *I am doing very well.*  
 (14) Adwoa: Bra mu [brem]. *Come in.*

<sup>2</sup> Sentence (2 – i.e. the second of the two opening statements) teaches ECM verbs (Culicover 1997) and “that-complementation” (Boadi 2005: 55) in context – having captured the use of *gye di*, students will also find it easy to use other ECM verbs such as *nim* (“to know”), *pɛ* (“want”), etc.

(Abenaa wura mu. *Abena enters.*)

Gradually, we built on pronouns from the song by introducing the plural pronouns: *mo* '2PL/you' (in 11), *yɛn* '1PL/our' (in 12), and *wo* '2SG/you' (also in 12). We then tried to document how to ask about one's health in (11-iii) and the response to it in (12a): *Yɛn ho yɛ* ("We are fine"). Students are taught to use the phrase/structure, *Na wo nso ε?* ("And you too?"), which is a reduced form of *Na wo nso wo ho te sɛn?* ("And you, how are you?"). The main difference between the full form and the reduced form is that in the reduced form, *wo ho te sɛn?* ("How are you?"), which is the main sentence used to inquire about health, is replaced by *ε*, a pro-sentential unit, because it (i.e. the question sentence) is preceded by the phrase *Na wo nso* ("And you too"). The only way students can learn the reduced form is for them to ask about the other person's health also, as in (12b). Syntactically, any question sentence in Akan that qualifies for and actually undergoes the *na wo nso*-prefixation is reducible to *ε*. In (12b), the fact that health is asked in a previous and immediate turn (i.e. 11-iii) is what makes the *na wo nso*-prefixation and the reduction of the question sentence to *ε* possible in (12b). In (14) we also see the use of *mu* ("in"), which reduces to *m* to be attached to *bra* ("come") to yield [brɛm] ("come in"). *Mu* is a postpositional morpheme whose NP, *fie* ("house"), is understood in the context of the knocking on a door, and so, is always omitted. Thus, we captured in the video when and how to reduce full forms/sentences – or how to derive variants of the same form/sentence and the context in which to do this.

An equally important feature of the excerpt in (8 – 14) is the use of exclamation marks; for example. *ei* ("hey") in (10) and (11) signals the joy of the friends meeting again. To use *ei* for a stranger will be alarming and insulting. *Ei* must always go with a name and the name bearer must be known and the speaker's social co-equal or subordinate for the form to convey the affective import as it is described in this context. The sequence/order in which the exclamation mark is delivered in (11) -- *Ei Adwoa, ei Yaa* ("Hey Adwoa, Hey Yaa") – suggests that Adwoa is first to be seen at the door, and then when the door is flung open, *Yaa* "pops up." Given that the door to the house/apartment is slightly open, and given their friendship and

closeness, one would have expected Abenaa to enter without knocking, and, yet, she does not. Instead, she utters *agoo* (also, *kɔkɔɔkɔ*), which culturally is her request for permission to do something – in this instance, her permission to gain entry into the house. This utterance is necessary because it otherwise would be regarded as her intruding on her friends' territory and privacy.

### *Act III: How to Welcome or Be Welcomed*

(D) Now, after entering the house Adwoa and Yaa work together to make Abenaa comfortable, to make her feel at home:

(15) Yaa: Abenaa, adwa nie. *Abenaa, this is a chair.*

(16) Abenaa: Meda wo ase [medaase]. (*I*) *thank you*

(Abenaa tena ase. *Abenaa sits down.*)

(17) Yaa: Yɛnda [yɛnna] ase. *Don't mention it.*

(18) Adwoa: Abenaa, nsuo nie. *Abenaa, this/ here is water.*

(19) Abenaa: Medaase. *Thank you.*

(20) Yaa: Yɛnna ase. *Don't mention it.*

(21) Adwoa ne Yaa: Abenaa, yɛma wo akwaaba.  
*Abenaa, you are welcome.*

(22) Abenaa: Yaa nua. *Peer response (Okay my sibling).*

(23) Adwoa: Abenaa, ɛha deɛ bɔkɔɔ. Wo na wonam.

Mpanyimfoɔ sɛ“Akwansosɛm na ɛyɛ dɛ.

*Abenaa, there is only peace here. YOU ARE visiting.*

*The elders say that it is the messenger we are all eager to hear from.*

(24) Abenaa: Adɛnta nso bɔkɔɔ. (ɛyɛ me sɛ) nnaawɔtwe a ɛtwaa  
mu no mekaa kyereɛɛ mo sɛ mɛba na moakyereɛ me  
Kelewele yɛ. ɛno ara [ɛnoaa] nti na menam.  
*There is only peace in Adenta. Last week I told you that I will come for you to teach me (how) to prepare Kelewele. That is why I have come.*

(25) Adwoa ne Yaa: Enti sε εbɔ ahe a na wobεpε sε wobεfiri ha?  
*So at what time would you want to leave here?*

(26) Abenaa: Seesei ara abɔ sεn? *What is the time right now?*

(27) Yaa: Abo nnɔn du apa ho sima aduasa. *It is ten thirty.*

(28) Abenaa: Mεpε sε mefiri ha nnɔn du-mmienu.  
*I would want to leave here at 12 (noon).*

They make Abenaa feel comfortable by offering her a seat to sit on. She is then offered water to drink according to tradition – as she may be thirsty from a long trip – and she shows her appreciation throughout these offers using *Meda wo ase* (“I thank you”) (16), and later *Medaase* (19), a variant and a reduced form of the former (16). Students therefore learn when ‘thank you’ can be reduced in the language, which is when the giving of thanks is in the second person singular. In (20) is the response. We also capture the sentence that is used in welcoming visitors (especially, those from a long/major trip) in (21), which has the same structure as greeting sentences in (11-i) and (51), except that (21) ends with *akwaaba*, whereas (11-i) ends with *akye*. The full welcome sentence is *X ma Y akwaaba* (“X gives Y welcome”) and is commonly reduced to *Akwaaba*. Adwoa and Yaa then ask her what the reason for her visit is using (23b) and (23c), which generates the response in (24) in observance of tradition. I then manage to weave time (and for that matter numbers) into the above scene by making students ask and tell time, in (26) to (28).

More importantly, we begin to see the sociolinguistics of communication in the Akan socio-cultural context. We learned who says what, when, where, and how. There is a great number of questions and responses. I believe that questioning is at the heart of communication in that it is what keeps a communicative event going. If everybody knows what the other person knows then what is need for these verbal exchanges. If communication is necessary, then it is to expose whatever is available to us in the form of statements, or what is not available to us in the form of questions. In asking the above questions, students also came to terms with the most culturally appropriate mode of turn-taking (see Obeng 1999: 25-94 on turn-taking in Akan). This scene also introduces them to aspects of non-

verbal cues in communication – for example, when and with whom to shake hands. *Akwaaba* is said with a handshake irrespective of the age and/or status difference of the interactants.

#### ***Act IV: The Cooking Session***

(E) Abenaa's friends teach her how to make *nkatekwān* ("peanut soup") and *kelewele*.

(29) (Sεneε yεyε nkatekwān. *How to prepare Peanut Soup*)

(a) Nkateε "peanut butter", (b) akokɔnam "chicken" (*duck meat was replaced by "chicken"*); (c) nsuom-nam a yεaho "smoked fish", (d) mako "pepper", (e) gyeene "onion", (f) magi, (g) ntoosi/amoo "tomatoes" (h) nkyen "salt (to taste)", ne ade "etc."

(Sεneε yεyε Kelewele "How to prepare Kelewele")

(30) Wobεdwa [duwa] kɔkɔɔ no. *Peel the ripe-plantain*

(31) Wobεhohoro ho. *Wash the peeled plantain*

(32) Afei, twitwa no nketenkete. *Then, cut it into bits*

(33) Fa nkyene, mako, ne akakaduro [\*akaradro] gu ho.  
*Soak it in water with salt, pepper and ginger*

(34) Afei na woakye. *Then fry it*

(35) (ma nkyε na danedane no)

*(Let it stay on fire for some time and turn it)*

(36) Sε εyε kɔkɔɔ a na woayiyi agu sɔnyε mu.

*Remove it from the oil when it is light brown and put it in a strainer.*

(37) Woawie. *You are done*

The cooking session gives students the chance to see and create the food items we have learned about in class and also to taste some of the target language community dishes. Now, this is a life-long study – hopefully, they will prepare these meals the rest of their lives. More importantly, the fact that the steps to preparing the meals have been captured on video, which each student gets a copy of, means that they can always watch it in order to remember the names of these

food items and how to put them together to make these meals. The cooking session also gives students the opportunity to learn cooking utensils by name in the target language (e.g. *sɔnyɛ* [“strainer”], *kwansɛn* [“soup-pot”], *ayowaa/asanka* [“mashing bowl”], *taporí* [“mashing stick”], etc.).

There is also division of labor that goes along with the cooking. Roles are assigned and instructions are given just the way a mother would to her children in Ghanaian communities. Another good thing about this cooking activity is that students are put in a position whereby they are either fully or partly responsible for the things that are created – to watch the video later is to watch themselves in these roles and makes recollecting whatever was done very easy. In the end, we eat the soup with *mankani fufu* (“pounded cocoyam”). We also make stew and cook *ampesi* (“boiled yam and plantain”).<sup>3</sup> We talk a lot about how cooking is largely the responsibility of the woman of the house, though men cook under certain circumstances, for instance, when one’s wife or any female available to perform this role is busy doing other things. Students also learn about how men who make unnecessary ‘encroachments’ into the kitchen are badly perceived in the Akan (and Ghanaian) culture. Students are taught a song that has been specifically been written to ridicule such men. The song is “*Øbarima potɔ ma me ta, no order in the kitchen*”, and was written by George Jahraa, a famous Ghanaian musician.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> From the day of the cooking session, individual students invited me to their apartments to teach them how to prepare other Ghanaian dishes – for example, *banku* and *Fante-Fante* – which I think I did perform very well, to the best of my knowledge and training as a man.

<sup>4</sup> *Øbarima potɔ ma me ta no order in the kitchen* (“it is my turn to use the mashing stick ...”) sings about men who fight their wives over whose turn is it to use the mashing stick, and by so doing, create disorderliness in the kitchen. The kitchen is not the man’s territory in which he may direct the woman around – a man who denies his wife of any freedom, even in the kitchen, is looked upon negatively.

### ***Act V: Showing Appreciation; Leave-taking***

(F) Having learned how to prepare the dishes, Abenaa thanks them, and sets off to go to the *trɔtrɔ* station (“the mini-van station or the bus stop”), where she will take the van to go to Legon.

(38) Abenaa: Kelewele no aye me dɛ paa ara.

*I have very much enjoyed the Kelewele.*

(39) Meda mo ase. *I thank you all.*

(40) Adwoa ne Yaa: Aseda wɔ Nyame. *Thanks belong to God.*

(41) Abenaa: ɛnneɛ merekɔ akɔfa trɔtrɔ akɔ Legon.

*Then I am leaving to go take trɔtrɔ to go to Accra*

(42) Adwoa ne Yaa: ɛnneɛ, akyire yi [akyirei]. *Then, later.*

(43) Abenaa: Yoo, akyirei. *Okay, (see you) later.*

It is significant to note two concepts from (38) to (43): the showing of appreciation (i.e. 38 – 40) and leave-taking (41 – 43). It also gives a brief picture of the transportation system in Ghana’s capital city. There are many individually-owned mini-vans, and these vans usually have what we call a ‘mate.’ The *mate* is an assistant to the driver whose main job is to collect fares from passengers. His other roles are to announce, by way of ‘shouting’, to the public where the van is heading to, and to open the passenger door for passengers to board it. The drivers’ mates are largely males. The term *trɔtrɔ* for these mini-passenger-vans derives from the word *trɔ* (“three pence”) from Gã, spoken by the Gã people. The Gã people occupy Accra – the capital city of Ghana – and the surrounding lands. The duplication of *trɔ* to *trɔtrɔ* simply captures what the amount was for each passenger at the inception of the *trɔtrɔ* business during the Gold Coast era (McLaughlin Owusu-Ansah 1994).

### ***Act VI: On her way to the Bus Stop; Students Sing Part of the Body***

(G) Now, as Abenaa walks down the path to the mini-van station, she is interrupted by three ‘Crazy’ Joggers (Kwasi, Akua and Amma), also American Citizens and her friends. The ‘Crazy’ Joggers sing

about the parts of the body and after singing the song twice, Abenaa joins in the singing.

- (44) Kyerɛ wo ti. *Show (point to) your head*
- (45) Sɔ w'aso. *Hold your ear*
- (46) Kyerɛ w'aniwa, wo hwene, w'ano wo kɔn.  
*Point to your eyes, your nose, and your neck*
- (47) Mewɔ nsa mmienu. *I have two hands*
- (48) M'afu kɛsɛɛ; me nan mmienu.  
*(With) my big stomach; (and) my two legs*
- (49) Me nsatea yɛ du. *My fingers are ten*
- (50) Me nansoa nso yɛ du. *(And) my toes are ten also*

This song focuses on the basic parts of the body – a song commonly sung in the elementary schools in the Akan-speaking areas of Ghana. The goal of using this song is to help the college student who is learning Akan as a foreign language cover as many parts of the body as possible. The song requires that students touch these parts as they sing them, and it is a good way to remember them. It is fascinating to see how students bring their own style of dance to the song. Characters, such as the three 'crazy' joggers, were students' own creations, and additions to the parts of the body song; these characters were fine with me because their role did not undermine the target language culture in any form. Structurally, the song reinforces the teaching of pronouns (i.e. possessive pronouns), the attributive use of adjectives, numbers, the basic imperative sentence, the copula *be*, and the permissible organization of the noun-head and its modifiers (e.g. *me nan mmienu*, literally "my leg two," i.e. "my two legs") (see Hancock 1999 on teaching grammar through songs).

### *Act VII: At the Bus Stop; Meeting for the first time*

(H) After some time singing with Abenaa, the three Crazy Joggers vanish into the bushes, leaving Abenaa standing there alone with her hands open in surprise. Abenaa continues to walk down the path to the mini-van station in Adɛnta, a suburb of Accra, where she meets Afia for the first time. There is an exchange of greetings, asking after

each others' health, where each person comes from, etc. They then realize that they are both from the United States. They continue this back and forth, asking about what each person is doing in Ghana, how long each intends to stay in Ghana and how long each has been in the country.

(51) Abenaa: Maakye. (From: *Mema wo akye*) *Good morning.*  
 (52) Afia: Yaa nua. *Peer response (Okay my sibling)*  
 (53) Abenaa: Wo ho te sεn? (ε te sεn?) *How are you/How is it?*  
 (54) Afia: εyε. Na wo nso ε?  
*I am fine/It is fine. And you too?*  
 (55) Abenaa: Me nso me ho yε. *I am also fine.*  
 (56) Afia: Yεfrε me Afia. *I am called Afia.*  
 (57) Wo nso, yεfrε wo sεn?  
*And you, what is your name?*  
 (58) Abenaa: Yεfrε me Abenaa. *I am called Abenaa.*  
 (59) Afia: Abenaa, wofiri ɔman bεn so?  
*Abenaa, what country are you from?*  
 (60) Abenaa: Mefiri US. *I am from the US.*  
 (61) Afia: Saa! Me nso, mefiri US.  
 (62) Wofiri US mpɔtam bεn?  
*Really! I am also from the US.*  
*You are from what state (in the US)?*  
 (63) Abenaa: Mefiri Indiana. Mefiri Indy.  
 (64) Na wofiri kuro bεn so?  
*I am from Indiana. I am from Indy.*  
*And, which town do you come from?*  
 (65) Afia: Mefiri Bloomington a εwɔ Indiana.  
*I am from Bloomington, which is in Indiana.*  
 (66) Abenaa: Wobaa ha bosome bεn mu?  
*In which month did you come here?/You came here in which month?*  
 (67) Afia: Mebaa ha ɔpεpɔn mu. *I came here in January.*

(68) Abenaa: Enti woadi abosome mmeɛnsa wɔ ha anaa?

*So, you have spent three months here, yes/no  
(i.e. isn't it)?*

(69) Afia: Aane. Wo nso, wobaa ha bosome bɛn mu?

*Yes. And you, you came here in which month?*

(70) Abenaa: Madi abosome num wɔ ha.

(71) Mebaa ha Obubuo mu.

*I have spent five months here.  
I came here in November.*

(72) Afia: Abenaa, na wo bɛsan ako US

bosome bɛn mu?

*Abenaa, and in what month are you going  
back to the US?*

(73) Abenaa: Mɛko US ɔsanaa mu.

*I will go to the US in August.*

(74) Afia: Me deɛ, mɛsan ako Kitawonsa mu.

*As for me, I will go back in July.*

Now, from a context of the familiar represented by (8) to (50), we move to the unfamiliar in (51) to (74). Here, students act out the basic requirements in meeting and speaking with someone for the first time. There must always be a (formal) greeting according to the time of the day (morning, afternoon, or evening). Here, through usage, students learn how the words *anɔpa*, *awia*, *anwummere* (“morning,” “afternoon,” and “evening,” respectively) are never used in greetings. They again acquire the extent to, and the context under, which greeting sentences may be truncated meaningfully; for example, *Mema wo akye* (“Good morning”) is reduced to *Maakye* in (51) meaningfully. Though only the peer response is in use (52), students basically learn and acquire all of the age-appropriate greeting responses. There is self-introduction in (56) to (58), and also a lesson on how much one would like to reveal about oneself based on how intimate one wants to be. This is illustrated when the characters ask and tell about where they live (i.e. residence) and where they come from (i.e. continent, country, state, town) in (59) to (65). They also inquire about the

month and year during which each came to Ghana, in (67) to (71), and discuss future plans in (72) to (74). These parts of the conversation allow students to use the months of the year.

As the content of the scene from (51) to (74) suggests, students learn and acquire the Akan equivalents of months of the year by using them to talk about past, present and future events. Important to note here is the fact that the words for months of the year, days of the week, partitive markers (i.e. postpositional nouns) and tense/aspect converge, and are acquired concurrently. Again, the student are able to learn, acquire, and document inclusive and exclusive words, such as *nso* (“also”) in (61) and *deε* (“as for me”) in (74).

### *Act VIII: At the bus stop: meeting someone you know*

(I) Yaa Panyin (or Yaa P.) finds Abenaa and Afia at the bus stop. Yaa P. and Afia are friends; Yaa P. and Abenaa are meeting for the first time. Like Afia and Abenaa, Yaa P. is a US citizen. The following is a conversation between the two friends, Afia and Yaa P:

*(Yaa Panyin ba mu. “Yaa Panyin comes/joins in.”)*

(75) Afia: Eei, Yaa (Panyin)! Hey, Yaa (P(anyin)).

(76) Yaa P.: Eei Afia. Afia, maakye.

*Hey, Afia. Afia, good morning.*

(77) Afia: Yaa nua. Response (peer response)

(78) Yaa P.: Maakye. *Good morning.*

*(Yaa P. kyea Abenaa. Yaa P. greets Abenaa.)*

(79) Abenaa: Yaa nua. Response (peer response)

(80) Afia: Yaa (P.), na εte sεn?

*Yaa (P.), how is it (i.e. how are you)?*

(81) Yaa P.: εyε. *It is fine/I am fine.*

(82) Na Yaw, worekɔ he?

*And Yaw, where are you going?”*

(83) Afia: Merekɔ Balme Laibri.

(84) Na wo nso ε?  
*I am going to the Balme Library.  
 And you too?*

(85) Yaa P.: Merekɔ Aburi. *I am going/traveling to Aburi.*

(86) Mεsan aba ɔkyena. *I will come back tomorrow.*

Afia has not seen Yaa P. for some time. She spots Yaa P. coming towards the station from afar, and shouts out her name with joy in (75). In (76), Yaa P. shouts Afia's name in return, also with great joy. And, as tradition demands, it is Yaa P. who walks up to Afia, so she greets Afia using the morning greeting. Afia responds to her using the peer response in (77), in indication of their similar age and status. Since Yaa P. finds Abenaa and Afia conversing, she assumes that they are together. Here, it is required that Yaa P. greets Abenaa as well (78) even though she does not know her. It must be noted that the greeting sentence for Abenaa (78), as with that for Afia (76), is in the bare/simple form – without the addressee's name given since she does not know her, and also without the exclamatory word. The absence of these elements is an indication that the two people – Yaa P. and Abenaa – are meeting for the first time, and symbolizes formality. The fact that they are meeting for the first time is further supported by the fact that Abenaa only gets a greeting. After a brief interruption in which she greets Abenaa in (78), Yaa P. gets back to Afia and they continue their conversation from (80) to (86). Yaa P. engages solely with Afia until Afia interrupts her to introduce the two – Yaa P. and Abenaa – to each other in the following session (J).

### ***Act IX: At the Bus Stop: Making Introduction***

(J) To introduce and to be introduced: To allay unfamiliarity or uncertainty and the tension it often creates in a communicative situation, Afia has no option but introduce the two to each other, in (87) to (89):

*(Afia de Yaa P. kyerε Abenaa “Afia shows/introduces Yaa P. to Abenaa.”)*

(87) Afia to Abenaa: Abenaa, m'adamfo nie.

(88)                    *Yεfrε no Yaa Panyin[panii].*  
                           *Abenaa, this is my friend.*  
                           *She is called Yaa Panyin [panii].*

(89) Afia to Yaa P.:    Yaa, yεfrε Awuraa yi Abenaa.  
                           *Yaa, this Lady is called Abenaa.*

                          (Abenaa ne Yaa Panyin di nkɔmmɔ.  
                           *Abenaa and Yaa Panyin converse.*)

(90) Abenaa:    Yaa P., wofiri ɔman bɛn so?  
                           *Yaa P., you are from which country?*

(91) Yaa P.:    Mefiri US. Mefiri Kentucky.

(92)                    Na wo nso, wofiri ɔman bɛn so?  
                           *I am from US. I am from Kentucky.*  
                           *And you too, you are from which country?*

(93) Abenaa:    Mefiri Indiana a ɛwɔ US.  
                           *I am from Indiana (which is) in the US.*

(94) Yaa P.:    Saa! Mekɔɔ sukuu wɔ IU.  
                           *Really! I went to school at IU.*

(95) Abenaa:    Wobaa ha bosome bɛn mu?  
                           *You came here in which month?/ (In which month did you come here?)*

(96) Yaa P.:    Mebaa ha ɔpɛpɔn 2005 mu.

(97)                    Na wo nso ε?  
                           *I came here in January 2005. And you too?*

(98) Abenaa:    Mebaa ha November mu.  
                           *I came here in November.*

(99) Yaa P.:    Na deɛn na woreyε wɔ Ghana?  
                           *And what are you doing in Ghana?*

(100) Abenaa:    Meresua adeε wɔ Legon. *I am studing at Legon.*

(101) Yaa P.:    Deɛn na woresua? *What are you studying?*

(102) Abenaa:    Meresua Baalɔgyi. *I am studying Biology.*

(103) Na wo nso ε? *And you too?*

(104) Yaa P.: Me deε meyε adwuma. *As for me, I work.*

(105) Abenaa: Saa! *Really!*

(106) Na wobεsan akɔ US bere bεn?  
*And when will you go back to the US?*

(107) Yaa P.: Mεkɔ US January 2007 mu.

(108) Wo nso, wobεsan akɔ...

(109) US bosome bεn mu?  
*I will go to the US in January 2007. You too, you will go back to the US in which month?*

(110) Abenaa: Mεsan akɔ US ɔsanaa mu.  
*I will go back to the US in August.*

The introduction significantly gives each one of the two individuals meeting for the first time the opportunity to expand their scope of friendship and knowledge. Students therefore get to use the target language in (87) to (110). By portraying Yaa P. and Abenaa as meeting for the first time, we are able to talk about where one comes from, from (90) to (93). They talk about places each has lived before in (94), and when each came to Ghana from (95) to (98) – these require that students use the past tense (from 94 to 98). They continue to talk about the purpose of their respective visits from (95) to (105), and what each is studying in school from (99) to (102), which requires that students use the present progressive sentence in Akan. In (104), Yaa P. says that she is working in Ghana; this sentence is in the habitual/stative form. From (106) to (110), they talk about when they intend to leave the target country for the source country, which requires that they use the future marker (i.e. *bε-*). Scene (87 – 110) allows us to revisit aspects of (51 – 74) for reinforcement as we delve into new areas of language study; for example, the use of *nie* (“this is”), and the fact that *nie* derives from *ne* (“be”) and *eyi* (“this”), and the use of *saa* (“really”).

### ***Act X: At the Bus Stop: Buying and Selling***

(K) From (111) to (137), Yaa P. sees a dress-seller (Akosua), calls her, haggles with her and buys from her. Calling Akosua into the scene expands the existing scenario, and interrupts the attempt to learn more about each other. Specifically, we move from concentration on school and work, and what one studies and where one is going, to buying and selling:

*(Akosua retɔn adeɛ. Oretwa mu hɔ.*

*"Akosua is selling. She is passing by."*

(111) Yaa P.: Ntaadeɛ Wura! *Dress seller/owner!*

(112) Akosua: Sista! *Sister!*

(113) Yaa P.: Bra! *Come!*

*(Akosua ba Yaa P. nkɛn "Akosua comes to Yaa P.")*

(114) Yaa P.: Ntaadeɛ no ye sɛnsɛn?

*The dresses are how much (how much)?*

(115) Akosua: Baako biara ye sidi du.

*Each (one) costs 10 GH Cedi.*

*(Yaa P. hwehwɛ ntaadeɛ no mu.*

*Yaa P. looks through the clothing.)*

(116) Abenaa: Wei ye fe. *This one is beautiful.*

(117) Afia: Aane. Ataadeɛ ɛno ye fe paa ara.

*Yes/Indeed. That dress is very beautiful.*

(118) Yaa P.: ɛye nokore. *It is true/You are right.*

(119) Mɛtɔ ɛno. *I will buy that one.*

(120) Mɛtumi ahyɛ akɔ asɔre.

*I will be able to wear to church.*

(121) Akosua: Hwɛ wei nso. *Look at this one too.*

(122) Yaa P.: Mɛtɔ wei ara. *I will buy this very one.*

(123) Yaa P.: Wose baako biara (boɔ) ye sidi du (anaa)?

*You said (say), each one costs 10 GH Cedi?*

(124) Akosua: Aane. Yes/*you are right*.  
 (125) Yaa P.: Te so. *Reduce it (i.e. the price)*.  
 (126) Mɛma wo sidi mmeɛnsa.  
*I will give you 3 GH Cedi.*  
 (127) Akosua: Daabi, ɛnyɛ. No, *it is not good* (*No, it is too low*).  
 (128) Ma me sidi nson. *Give me 7 GH Cedi.*  
 (129) Yaa P.: Te so kakra. *Reduce (it) a little bit.*  
 (130) Metua sidi nan. *I will pay 4 GH Cedi.*  
 (131) Akosua: Ma me sidi num. *Give me 5 GH Cedi.*  
 (132) Mente so bio. *I will not reduce it any further.*  
 (133) Yaa P.: Medaase. (*I*) *thank you.*  
 (134) Gye sika no. *Take/collect the money.*  
 ɛye sidi du. *It is 10 GH Cedi.*

What triggers the new scenario is Yaa P.'s interest, and therefore her calling of Akosua, the dress seller. The first thing to pay attention to is how Akosua is referred to in (111) -- *Ntaadeɛ Wura* (“dress owner/seller”) – and why she is referred to in this way. She is called *Ntaadeɛ wura* because she sells *ntaadeɛ* (“dresses”). Again, Yaa P. is meeting the dress seller for the first time and does not know her name. An equally possible reason that Yaa P. calls her in such a way is that there are other people in the scene selling other wares, and the only way to distinguish Akosua is to call her by what she sells. The response from Akosua is *Sista*, which is an honorific usage of the English word “sister,” usually used for a respected female person of either the speaker’s age or older (but not old enough to be one’s mother). Using *Sista* here leads us to learn similar terms like *braa* (from “brother”), and *oluman* (“old man”). Hawkers are mostly female, hence the use of a female character in the video production.

From (114) to (133), we acquire and therefore document the basics of selling and buying, namely, how to inquire about the prices of things, receive a quote, and the skills necessary to haggle the price down – a skill equally relevant in the open market. The negotiation for a lesser price comes always after one knows what is it that he or

she wants to buy, which is decided from (116) to (122), with the help of friends or standers by (116 – 119).

Hawkers mostly carry their wares on their heads and Akosua (the dress-seller) does so in the video – this is something we do not find in the source language cultural context. The decision, therefore, to capture hawking in the video is essentially a noble one in terms of introducing the language learners to something unfamiliar and seemingly foreign. Hawking is marked by its position within the following three modes of buying and selling: the open market system, the store, and hawking. More so, the skill to haggle in a hawking situation is equally relevant in the open market system (and occasionally in the store system), which the video does not capture. In (121) we see an effort on the part of the seller to alter Yaa P.’s final decision as it is stated in (119). The question is: how do you know the seller is being honest in her suggestions? It is also possible that the seller is being helpful. My advice to students has been that when they doubt a seller’s sincerity, they should rely on their own judgment and/or the judgment of their friends. In the video, we see Afia and Abenaa helping Yaa P. to choose the best out of many dresses, and Yaa P. eventually sides with them (116 – 119). This does not mean one should always heed such advice, but Yaa P. needs the dress to wear to church, and it happens that she can indeed wear it to church, and so buys it.

It is here, in (120), that we remind students of things we have learned about faith and religion in the target language cultural context; an example of this is the fact that there are three main religions in Ghana – Christianity, Islam, and the indigenous religion – and the fact that Ghana enjoys religious freedoms and religious tolerance. The scene also allows us to learn about the currency of Ghana, aside from the banks, the forex bureaus in Ghana where foreign currencies can be changed, the exchange rates in Ghana, the value of the Ghanaian currency in terms of what it can buy compared to the dollar, and the use of numbers (i.e. doing mathematics using the target language).

### ***Act XI: At the Bus Stop: Leave-taking (L); Parting Ways (M) – a Song***

(L) Appreciation and leave-taking: Yaa P. and Akosua (the dress-seller) thank each other – the initiator here is Yaa P., and Akosua, the reciprocator.

- (135) Akosua: Me nso medaase. *I also (I) thank you.*
- (136) Nsesa no nie. *This is the change.*
- (137) ԑye sidi mpem num. *It is 5,000 cedis.*
- (138) ԑnneԑ, merekɔ. *Then, I am going/leaving.*
- (139) Yaa/Abenaa/Afia: Yoo. *Okay/Alright.*

Though Yaa P. does not get the dress for free, she still feels the need to thank Akosua for her time and for her patience, which is a very respectful act. From (136) to (138), Akosua reaches into her purse and hands Yaa P. her change and then bids them farewell, as she leaves them to continue to sell her dresses. Their response in (139) is *Yoo* (“okay”). Akosua leaves the scene as the three continue to wait for the bus.

(M) After some time, three vans arrive and the three go their separate ways. The lesson here is how we are able to tie transportation in Ghana to the existing scenarios (or mini-events). Students do not really get on a van, as we did not have the luxury to do so. We just show pictures of three vans as we play the following song that the class has recorded earlier. So the video ends with the song, and we also get to see who the producer and actors are on screen.

- (140)
  - (a) Se yԑdi ntete mu a...  
*With the event over and us going our separate ways...*
  - (b) ԑye yԑn ya(w) bebree.  
*We are very sad*
  - (c) Nanso yԑwɔ ani da so...  
*However, we are very hopeful...*
  - (d) Se daakye bi yԑbԑhyia mu.

*...that we will meet in the (near) future*

(e) Nanso yewo anidaso...

*(Though it is painful) we are rest assured ...*

(f) sɛ daakye bi yebɛhyia mu.

*...that in the future we will meet*

The song basically tells of their parting, the pain involved, how they will be missing one another, and the hope that they will all meet again in the (near) future. Structurally, we learn *nanso* (“but”) and reinforce the conditional (*sɛ ... a ...*) and future sentence constructions in a context.

As I have learned through making this video, bringing the target language materials covered in class into reality is the best possible avenue for addressing language retention problems. Do not limit the language experience to the four walls of the classroom. After all, what we seek are the experiences of real people who only exist in the real world. Classroom experiences must therefore become real world experiences, and where the target language reality is out of reach, as is the case with Akan, simulations will have to do. The most reliable technique to acquisition is to let the learner live what is being learned by exposing him/her to either the reality of what is being learned, or to simulations of it, as we did with the video project. Engaging reality or simulations of it significantly takes the focus off of structure and grammar and integrates actual practice and performance, thus helping to reinforce and actualize that which has been, or is being, learned. This has been one of my occupational maxims: To retain items learned is to live them; and to live them is to retain them!

Now, I would like to make a note on the use of music and songs in language instruction, as songs do pervade this project. The content and context of a song must significantly deliver on instructional goals. Featured in the film are three songs -- a song on parts of the body, a song on food preparation, and a song to bid farewell to each other with the semester coming to a close -- though we had learned more than three songs in class. It can be very daunting to learn a foreign language, with learners’ performances under constant scrutiny by peers and teachers, as often happens in foreign language classrooms. It is often very difficult to bring out the best in most stu-

dents in such an environment. We must therefore do everything within our ability to avert such a situation by engaging students often in activities that will lighten the mood of the classroom, which the singing of songs in the target language has the ability to do through taking the focus away from the individual and placing it on the group. Traditionally (especially in Ghana and in the West African context), songs are sung in times of joy and sorrow. These are times when there is less focus on the individual self and more of a focus on the events responsible for the two states. The excitement that comes with the hearing and singing of a song in the foreign language classroom makes one focus less on self and rather more on the song – the rhythm, the sound-rhythmic association, the meaning, the dance, etc. – and the joy the entire package brings to the hearer or the singer. This, to me, is a good recipe to either remove completely or minimize the state of consciousness, and for that matter, the over-attention placed on the self and on how one is not performing well enough – feelings that often accompany the learning of the new and do not augur well for the acquisition of the unfamiliar. To use songs in a foreign language class, as I have consistently done, is to kill two birds with a single stone – the production of excitement, which then sets the stage for acquisition.

## 5. Conclusion

This project is structured to ensure that, through simulations, students understand and acquire the act and art of communication in their new language in its socio-cultural context. It is also carefully structured and delivered to enhance students' structural understandings of, and consequently their ability to express or construct their own thoughts and/or socio-cultural realities/experiences in, the target language. Thus, knowledge of the structure (i.e. all possible formal realizations) and function (i.e. information about context and usage) of the target language could, and ought to be, pursued simultaneously in this effort. Structurally, items on a list (e.g. months of the year, days of the week, numbers, etc) and any two events or words/phrases that often collocate were thrown out to forbid rote memory. We also see a great deal of division of labor going on in the video project (i.e. role specialization) which requires that each student performs his/her role(s) in the context of the remaining roles, and

this stresses the need to be able to perform one's role(s) very efficiently. To efficiently perform your role(s) in relation to the remaining roles is to understand and, very often, be able to perform such roles equally well. For this reason, each student is guided to be able to perform any role, though not every student can efficiently perform every role -- hence the room for role specialization. Role specialization creates some level of interdependence, mutual benefit, and a sense of community that I very much admire.

This project promotes cooperation and collaboration, which are key principles of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) theory (Brown 2001) in language learning. More significantly, it allows for students' abilities, skills and experiences to be utilized in the learning process. According to Ausubel (1968:vi), in his Meaningful Learning Framework (MLF), “[t]he most important single factor influencing learning is what the learner already knows. Ascertain this and teach accordingly.” For example, some of the students possess a good amount of knowledge about technology, which becomes useful during the filming process. Injecting reality into text – or bringing the text alive – makes learning the new language very meaningful and relevant to students. As noted by Ofori (2009: 67), “a language is only valuable (i.e. relevant) for what it does, did, can do, or is made to do for its user(s) in a given space and time.” We must therefore facilitate desire for language acquisition by giving students the opportunity to use the new language creatively and relevantly. Creative usage of the target language instills into students the idea of material development and/or language documentation, which we desperately need in the teaching of least documented languages. By so doing, students become agents of language documentation as opposed to consumers in a way that widens the current scope of teaching/learning materials. This project also allows for issues covered and students' creative work at each level of language study to not go to waste, but to be preserved for posterity. Again, it allows for a longitudinal study of student capacities in ways that inform pedagogy and material development. In other words, the fact that the final product is going to be archived – aside from it helping both the teacher and the learner to go back easily and authentically – gives the language teacher the chance to monitor students' progress over time as they transition through the different levels of instruction and acquisition.

Perhaps more significantly, this video project meets the standards goals (Blaz 2002) in the sense that it gives students the opportunity to communicate in the target language, and to learn and act out the target culture in a way that is easy to recollect in the target-language setting. It also gives students the opportunity to compare the target language and culture with their own to better understand the target culture, and to see themselves as a community – a community that guarantees each and every student-member a place and a role. Students are allowed to connect the new language (or aspects of the new language assigned to them) to things they already know in a way that makes each student feel wanted in – or to see him-self/herself as an important, unique member of – this classroom community.

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