



# CULTURAL INTERVIEWS

Birgit Deir and Marianne Kroon  
Nazareth College in Rochester, NY

[bdeir9@naz.edu](mailto:bdeir9@naz.edu)

[mkroon6@naz.edu](mailto:mkroon6@naz.edu)

CALICO 2011



**CULTURAL INTERVIEWS:  
SPANISH**

# CULTURAL INTERVIEWS: SPANISH

## ◉ Project Description

- ◉ Dr. Cristina Carrasco and Dr. Hilda Chacón from our Foreign Languages and Literatures department requested for the Emerson Language Lab to conduct cultural interviews in Spanish with international students.
- ◉ The professors wanted us to interview students from Cono Sur in South America and from Central America to complement their textbook Metas which covers these regions.
- ◉ The professors provided us with the interview questions.



# CULTURAL INTERVIEWS: SPANISH

## ○ Project Implementation

- Nazareth students with advanced Spanish language skills conducted the interviews.
- We recorded the interviews using a simple camera and a stand.
- Dr. Chacón requested for the interviewees to be video-recorded from close range, so that students watching could see lip movements for better comprehension.
- Interviewer and interviewee signed release forms allowing Nazareth College to use the interviews.



# CULTURAL INTERVIEWS: SPANISH

## ○ Project Integration

- Professor Carrasco had students watch interviews and write a reflection based on it, describing ten things they learned. This was followed by a class discussion.
- Alternatively, Professor Carrasco watched the interview with her students in class, followed by a class discussion.
- Professor Chacón used the interview as a stimulus when covering the particular Spanish-speaking regions.





**CULTURAL INTERVIEWS:  
ENGLISH**

## CULTURAL INTERVIEWS: ENGLISH

- Interviews are a tool for English language learning
  - Learning language through content
  - Authentic language
  - Communicative approach
  - Provides outstanding opportunities for speaking, listening and writing



## CULTURAL INTERVIEWS: ENGLISH

- Interviews are a tool for building a classroom community and intercultural awareness, and integrating international students into the larger college community
  - Involves other disciplines in being aware of the international students, and draws on the students' expertise
  - Provides international students with a way to help others move beyond stereotypes and deepen their understanding of other cultures





## CULTURAL INTERVIEWS: ENGLISH

- Provides international students with an opportunity to learn about other world cultures, and an awareness of their own prejudices and stereotypes of others
- Provides opportunities to build community and for shared experiences
- Highlights how small cultural differences can be huge impediments to communication



# CULTURAL INTERVIEWS: ENGLISH

## ○ Project Description

- We asked international students from Professor Kroon's English class to participate in cultural interviews.
- Students, assistants, and professors provided input for questions to use.
- We presented students with 10 general questions covering broad aspects of culture as well as 2-3 country-specific questions.
- Students substituted their own questions for those they did not like or did not want to answer.



# CULTURAL INTERVIEWS: ENGLISH

- Topics covered by 10 general questions:
  - Culture
  - Family
  - Education
  - Religion
  - Holidays
  - Politics
  - Living Standard
  - Fashion
  - “Exports”
  - Language
- Variety of topics for 2-3 country-specific questions



# CULTURAL INTERVIEWS: ENGLISH

## ○ Project Implementation

- Students signed up for interview time slots.
- Lab assistants conducted interviews.
- We recorded interviews using a simple camera and a stand.
- Interviewer and interviewee were recorded in variety of settings.
- Video files, interview questions, scanned release forms were organized in folders.



# CULTURAL INTERVIEWS: ENGLISH

- Project Integration
  - Blackboard assignment
- Before the Interview
  - What do you know about the country?
  - What stereotype(s) do you have about the culture?
- After the Interview
  - What did you learn about the country that you didn't know before?
  - What is the strongest part of this interview and what suggestions would you have for improvement?



# CULTURAL INTERVIEWS

## ○ Helpful Hints

- Interviewer
  - Look for talented interviewers and/or train
- Setting
  - Nice background, lighting
  - Avoid swivel chairs, camera mishaps, background noise
- Check video files immediately
  - Avoid retakes
- Organization
  - Small project - less organization
  - Project across languages – more detailed information required

