

PHILOSOPHICAL RATIONALE FOR THE SILC CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

The faculty at Spring International Language Center at the University of Arkansas share a general pedagogical philosophy that embraces the concepts of different learning styles and multiple intelligences. Our vast teaching experience, coupled with our solid academic backgrounds in methodology and second language acquisition, inform our curriculum design and daily pedagogical choices.

Realizing that the students in our classes will always be varying combinations of the three basic types of learners --visual, auditory, and kinesthetic-- and, more complexly, will have varying degrees of the seven "intelligences" as described by Dr. Howard Gardner, our faculty and our course curricula are geared to teach English and American culture to our students in a wide variety of ways, using images, sound, analytical formulas, music, cinema, and both individual and interpersonal kinesthetic activities. As a faculty, we are in accord that any one teaching methodology, or any pedagogical "fad," can be neither a complete nor a satisfactory way to teach our students but may be a useful addition to our eclectic repertoire of approaches. Besides addressing individual learning styles and intelligences, we also agree that variety in teaching minimizes tedium and helps keep our students actively interested during the learning process. While the SILC curriculum is a highly structured academic curriculum in terms of level progression and sequenced objectives, it is not a fixed set of lessons. Rather, it provides a clearly structured framework within which professionally trained instructors can manipulate materials and teaching styles to accommodate and support the variety of cultures, needs, levels of language proficiency, and individual learning styles that our students bring to the classroom.

The curriculum plays a fundamental role in fulfilling the program's mission. It is designed to move the students as quickly as possible toward mastery of the level and type of English which they need to function in an academic environment in a new culture. This goal is accomplished in an atmosphere of respect for cultural differences, reflected in the attitudes of instructors and staff, and supported by a variety of lesson topics, functions, and activities which help students deal with their cultural concerns.