



Navigating A Perfect Storm

A 1997 novel by Sebastian Junger titled The Perfect Storm (followed by a George Clooney movie of the same name) chronicled the real-life drama of a Massachusetts fishing community caught in the destructive path of what was called “the storm of the century.” A highly unusual confluence of atmospheric pressure, winds and ocean currents resulted in an awesome meteorological phenomenon characterized by 100-foot waves, winds of 120 miles per hour and vast extremes of barometric pressure. The results, while short-lived, were devastating.

Another perfect storm rages today, this one not meteorological, but economic. It, too, is the result of an unusual confluence of factors that together are working havoc on what were relatively calm economic seas: economic recession, growing inflation, unprecedented oil prices, a very volatile stock market and the plummet of the dollar to all-time lows against the euro. Caught in this perfect, seemingly unrelenting storm is the American traveler.

As this storm continues to rage, bad news follows bad: airline fuel charges are steadily rising; purchasing power abroad is eroding, undoing one budget after another; airlines are eliminating flights and finding new ways to raise revenues; Americans everywhere are reassessing priorities as to travel plans; for some the cost of traveling abroad is reaching a level of questionable affordability.

Caught in the vortex of such a powerful storm and shrouded in a dark cloud of pessimism, we seek the proverbial glimmer of hope on the horizon. When will the rough seas calm? Will some beacon glow to guide us to shore? Is there a positive perspective to be had?

In economics there is a contrarian view that a period of economic difficulties is the perfect time for investment in the future. If one properly views the ISE immersion program as an educational investment for which some measure of current sacrifice is acceptable or necessary, then one can participate—even in a time of economic tumult—with confidence and optimism. Value can trump sacrifice. After all, the past is too late; the future is unsure. The present is ours to act in if there is true merit in what we choose to do.

The exact returns on an investment in the ISE immersion experience vary with individual commitment to goals, but in general include: improved proficiency in another language, a degree of cultural competence and understanding of what this means, a personal awareness of the importance of critical thinking skills, a new perspective about the broader world that only comes from personal connections made abroad, and a growth in personal maturity and self confidence. The big question is: Do these desired outcomes constitute enough value to justify the cost in pursuing them?

The beacon that will draw us safely to shore out of the present troubled waters is the values we embrace. Among these is the importance of education and preparing students to become responsible and informed global citizens, the same students who are positioned to reap the aforementioned positive outcomes. In short, what can guide us through this difficult period is the bright light of the ISE mission.

A wise adage proclaims, “Where there is a will, there is a way.” It is possible to overcome the adversity confronting us on the economic seas and to find ways to navigate safely through challenging waves. Early enrollment opportunities provide ballast against sinking resources. ISE financial aid can provide buoyancy to drowning budgets. The ability to pay by credit card will provide an additional lifeline. Flexible payment plans can buffet strong winds that threaten to capsize vessels of unrealized dreams.

ISE is committed to navigate the present perfect storm and to do all we can to aid our stakeholders in crossing to beautiful shores. The choppy waves will provide a bumpy ride and the howling winds will seek to blow us astray. But we have navigated troubled seas before and now, as then, we will prevail to again see calmer waters. Focus on our shared mission will sustain us.

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Tanya Gajewski: New Director of Education

B.A. French and International Studies, Kalamazoo College
M.A. Psychology, University of MN

It seems impossible to me that it has been 20 years since my first experience living abroad. I was 17 years old when I spent one year in Lyon, France, going to school and living with three different host families. It was a year that changed my life in countless positive ways and has had a lasting effect on my interactions with and perceptions of people and cultures.

As the new Director of Education, I will bring not only an appreciation and enthusiasm for language learning and intercultural exchange but also over 10 years of experience in nonprofit leadership. From what I have learned in my new role at Intercultural Student Experiences, I share with you all a commitment to expanding the values of global citizenship and intercultural education. I look forward to working with the staff, teachers, Board and volunteers of ISE.

Tanya Gajewski



Executive Director Notes

Hello from all of us at ISE. Our busy summer is a reflection of many changes to better serve our stakeholders. Our website is under major revision. We plan an early fall launch. The ISE board of directors is completing our strategic planning process. Final details of the strategic plan are

not yet confirmed but I can give you some information about potential future direction for ISE. We will be looking at cultural competency and the use of language in a broader context. This translates into new program offerings. We anticipate a revised mission statement to better state our intention. Finally, administrative changes (especially paperwork reduction) are being reviewed and revised to make registration, payment and understanding of each program's uniqueness easier for teachers, parents and students.

It seems that each week in the paper I read more negative news about costs that affect ISE programs. "Navigating a Perfect Storm," on the front page provides a good metaphor for our shared situation. Our status as a nonprofit organization does not protect us from these challenging external cost factors. What this means for our stakeholders is that our base program costs are higher overall, fuel surcharges compound these increases and students and teachers on European programs have higher in-country out of pocket costs because of the exchange rate.

What is to be done about these challenges? First, recognize that the experts note that these challenges may remain with us for some time. When planning an ISE program, dialogue about the external environment so that ISE pricing and overall program cost is placed in a realistic context. I am confident that parents will continue to view an ISE program as an educational investment. I encourage teachers to plan early, consider shorter programs if cost is an issue for their group, and communicate with parents and students about our present economic situation. I promote students' role in cost containment by creatively raising dollars on their own through employment, individual or group fundraising, and giving up extras to meet their goal of taking a cultural journey. Finally, low income students are encouraged to apply for ISE financial aid.

ISE is committed to offering programs that serve as many students as possible each year. We continue to look at ways to keep costs down and work closely with teachers in the planning process. Please feel free to contact me if you have questions about any item in this newsletter or other questions about the work of ISE. Thank you!

Seeing the World in Many Layers,

Cindy Murphy Kelley

Classroom Tidbits

Rätsel

Das dritte Kind

Peters Mutter hat drei Kinder: Tick, Trick und ?

(Peter, natürlich!)

Der höchste Berg

Welcher Berg war vor der Entdeckung des Mount Everest der höchste?

(Der Mount Everest war auch schon der höchste Berg bevor er entdeckt wurde.)

Oft und doch selten

Was kommt einmal in jeder Minute, zweimal in jedem Moment aber nie in tausend Jahren vor?

(Der Buchstabe "M".)

Leicht und farblos?

Es hat keine Farbe, trotzdem kann man es sehen. Es wiegt nichts, aber jeder Gegenstand wird damit leichter. Was ist das?

(Ein Loch)



Divinette



Qui suis-je?

Je suis plus puissant que Dieu.
Je suis plus méchant que le diable.
Le pauvre en possède.
Le riche en manque.
Et si vous me mangez, vous mourrez.
Qui suis-je?
(Rien)

Je suis dans l'étang et au fond du jardin.
Je commence la nuit et finis le matin.
J'apparais deux fois dans l'année.
Qui suis-je?
(la lettre N)

Je suis à la tête d'une armée de 26.
Et sans moi Paris serait pris.
Qui suis-je?
(la lettre A)

Adivinazas

Adivina quien soy:

Cuanto más lavo,
más sucia voy.

A pesar de tener patas,
yo no me puedo mover;
me cargan comida,
y no la puedo comer.

Cien amigos tengo,
todas sobre una tabla.
Si no las tocas,
no te dicen nada.

(Respuestas: el agua, la mesa, el piano)

(Source: Paul and Julia Conley: web.mac.com/pconley3/iweb/Site/Home.html)



To celebrate the International Year of Languages, UNESCO invites governments, United Nations organizations, civil society organizations, educational institutions, professional associations and all other stakeholders to increase their own activities to promote and protect all languages, particularly endangered languages, in all individual and collective contexts. For more information visit:

<http://www.un.org/events/iyl/index.shtml>

Mission Watch

Impacting Lives:

“My whole life I have wanted to travel the world, but because money is limited, it has never been possible for me to do this. Through the ISE program, and with the help from this grant (Robert D. Green Memorial Fund), I finally made it to France. My language has improved and I have memories to be held for the rest of my life. This trip was literally a dream come true for me. THANK YOU.” — Student, Sabin, MN

“My experiences in Spain changed my life. I discovered that I love to learn and I can’t wait to expand my knowledge of language and culture, to better prepare myself to make a difference in our world.” — Student, Gypsum, CO

“I want to say what a great experience it was to work with everyone at ISE. It was exciting to watch students grow in so many ways as they prepared for and lived out this program. The emphasis on the use of the target language was a primary factor for my choosing the ISE program. One of the things I enjoyed the most was seeing the new comfort level in language use that returning students demonstrated in the classroom. Keep up the good work!!!!” — Teacher, Jamestown, ND

Spring and summer evaluation results: Meeting the Mission!

96% of students who traveled with ISE reported that their language skills improved “greatly” or “somewhat” after the experience. 92% of our teachers reported that they spoke the target language over 50% of the time with students during their travel experience. 66% of those teachers spoke it at least 75% of the time.

Bravo to you all!

My Perspective: Dennis Meredith

When I was a boy, my mother taught me about three inevitable events in life: taxes, death and, if one is lucky, retirement. The first I know well. The second is awaiting me (for a long time, I hope). The third is actually imminent, effective September 1. I am happy to have this space for a valedictory of sorts.

The thought of retirement always seemed distant to me! It was something for old people (this a foolish notion that possesses youth). Now that I am ready to retire, I consider it an opportunity for the young in heart and that’s me!

The Latin phrase, *tempus fugit*, says it all. A thirty-seven year career, fourteen as a Spanish teacher and twenty-three at ISE, has happened seemingly overnight. I’m pleased to say that ISE has played a significant part in my life for thirty-one of these years as I traveled with my students to Spain on the ISE program over a ten-year period before going on to work full time as ISE’s Spain Coordinator and then Director of Education. What brought me to ISE was what brings most teachers: a strong nonprofit mission that truly promotes second-language proficiency and cultural competence. These important objectives were simply not available to me on a typical tour-only program.

ISE has enriched my life, both professionally and personally. I have been blessed with many opportunities to travel in Spain, Costa Rica, Mexico, France and Germany. The memories are too many to innumerate in this space. Among them: running out of gas in France trying to find a “sans plomb” gas station; experiencing everyday life among distinct indigenous villagers in Chiapas, Mexico; creating the Sonrisas Yucatecas program while traveling with ISE founder, Edie Green; taking a “banana train” excursion in lush Costa Rica; consuming plate after plate of *tapas* in Madrid with Spanish friends.

My tenure at ISE has provided me many opportunities to exercise creativity: in the writing of materials for teachers and students, in the planning of twenty-three annual leader workshops, in the giving of presentations to parents and before state and national world language conferences. The challenges inherent in the work we do has enabled me to grow as a problem solver and critical thinker.

I have met hundreds of teachers from throughout the United States whom it has been a genuine pleasure to know and learn from. I will miss you!

What lies ahead for me? Lots of travel. Lots of good books. Learning German.

Learning to play the piano (maybe overly ambitious?). Lots of projects around the house. A leisurely morning with coffee and newspaper. And volunteer work, beginning with occasional gigs for ISE.

It is customary on an occasion like this to not only reflect on the past and the future, but to render sage counsel. My advice to all is simple and hardly original with me: love what you do and do what you love; always have something, however simple, to look forward to every day.

My wish for you is that you continue or begin meaningful travel experiences with ISE and that you, like me decades ago, have the awesome privilege of immersing your students in another culture.

The best to you all.

Dennis Meredith



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ISE NEWSLETTER

?Le gusta hablar español?
Sprechen Sie gerne deutsch?
Aimez-vous parler français?
Then you'll love ISE!



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