

# Northern Accents

DEPARTMENT OF MODERN LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES

## SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Derek graduated from NMU in 2004 with a major in philosophy and a minor in French.
- Derek began teaching at the Speed School of English at Bialsko-Biala, Poland
- Derek also taught English at the Krakow Accent School of English.

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## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: DEREK OKONKOWSKI

Derek Okonkowski graduated from NMU in 2004 with a major in philosophy and a minor in French. Although he studied abroad in Aix on Provence, France at the American University, he hasn't been speaking French very much lately. He vehemently subscribes to the notion that if you don't "use it you lose it." He admits that, for the most part, he has relegated his francophone past to his mind's backburner, perhaps to be moved to the front of the stove as needed. For the last three years a different language has occupied his mind's coveted front burner—Polish.

Soon after receiving his Bachelor's degree from NMU, Derek became interested in teaching English

teach English in Poland. Although, his ancestral roots happen to hold firmly upright a Polish tree, his selection to a Polish program was purely serendipitous. In the three weeks before reporting to work in Poland, he taught himself the Polish alphabet and phonetics. Over the next year, he used books and other media (along with immersion) to reach a conversational level of Polish that allowed him to "get by" from day to day. Then, he began formal Polish language classes. *(Continued on page 2)*



The main square at Krakow, Poland

abroad. He applied to programs (not affiliated with NMU) in ten different countries and was offered a job to

## VIRTUAL LANGUAGE TUTORING

Few of us would disagree that Marquette is a unique and beautiful place to live but, if you're a language student, you probably don't come into contact with very many native speakers of the language you are studying. One solution to this problem is available in the form of a

"virtual" world called "Second Life." What is Second Life? According to their official website, [www.secondlife.com](http://www.secondlife.com), Second Life is a: "3-D virtual world entirely created by its Residents." Since opening to the public in 2003, it has *(Continued on page 2)*



A French beach in Second Life

## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT, CONT

Derek began teaching at the Speed School of English at Bielsko-Biala, Poland. The main goal of the Speed School of English was to act as a supplement for English classes students had already received. Derek also lived in Krakow, Poland and taught English to elementary and advanced students at the Krakow-Accent School of English. The Accent School of English differs from the Speed School in that students are taught English from the ground up. Derek also taught a class on the history of the English language.

Derek's surname is Polish and, like all Polish surnames, it not only identifies a family group, it may describe the profession of that group. Derek's surname, for instance, is "Okonkowski." To define his name we can look at in three separate sections. "Okon" is a kind of fish. "Ski" is a group or clan. "Kow" modifies "ski" to designate that the group or clan is large. Therefore, Derek's distant ancestors probably made a living by fishing. Polish names, first and last, designate gender so male names usually end with a consonant or sometimes with an "o" and female

names almost always end with an "a." While living in Poland, Derek was able to visit several other countries including Latvia, Croatia, Greece, Ukraine, Estonia, Slovakia and Czech Republic—often to spend a weekend in Prague with friends. He has also traveled to Mexico and throughout Western Europe.

Derek's favorite thing about living in Poland was that he was able to get to know himself better by living within a social dynamic that is very different from what he was used to. In Poland, people organize themselves into close-knit groups of family and friends. If you are not a part of one those groups, you may perceive that you are being treated rudely or aggressively. The Polish, especially the older generations, are very protective of their own interests and the interests of those within their group.

Derek found that his ability to speak Polish helped him earn the respect and admiration of his neighbors especially since speaking Polish is not necessarily advantageous outside of Poland.

The popularity of English in Poland is increasing rapidly. English is widely spoken in major Polish cities (especially

Krakow). There is a lot of business, international trade, and universities in the large cities and tourists may be surprised at how well they can get by without being able to speak Polish. Like other countries, Polish accents will vary depending on what part of the country you are in and people close to Poland's



*The Sulkowski Castle at Bielsko-Biala*

borders may be bilingual. Derek definitely plans to go back to Poland to visit his friends but isn't sure if he will ever live there again. For the time being, he plans to continue teaching while enjoying life in Marquette, MI.

## VIRTUAL LANGUAGE TUTORING (CONT'D)

grown explosively and today is inhabited by millions of residents from around the globe. From the moment you enter the world, you'll discover a vast digital continent, teeming with people, entertainment, experiences and opportunity.

Second Life is free to download and use (you can subscribe for premium benefits). Instructions on how to navigate through Second Life (you can fly, walk, run, drive or even teleport *Star Trek* style) and how to create your own avatar\* are readily available on their website and tutorials are available when you sign in.

Once you become comfortable moving around within Second Life, you can start

to take advantage of the language resources it provides. Several groups offer tutoring and lessons (or just conversation) in French, Spanish, German, Chinese and other languages. You can find these groups by doing a search from the toolbar. Once you find a group you're interested in, you can join. You will receive information from the group moderator via email and through your Second Life account. Most groups also make transcripts of meetings and materials available. You can also "teleport" to different lands within Second Life to meet with other people and practice speaking in a virtual social setting.

For example, you can visit France Pittoresque and speak French on the beach. You can also speak Spanish (and other languages) at the

Bella Vida Jazz club. Listen to some jazz music (broadcasted live via the internet on Saturday nights) and meet real people from all over the world.

Second Life is interesting because you don't just speak in text like instant messaging, you actually see the person you are talking to. It is also possible to hone your pronunciation and listening skills by speaking to your virtual friends via a microphone. Second Life is a new and innovative way to interact with people of different cultures and to help improve your language skills. For more information, check out their website. For a list of language groups see page three's "The World From the Web."

# THE WORLD FROM THE WEB

## Language Learning Groups in *Second Life*.

**The Second Life School of Languages**  
A group for those who are interested in teaching and tutoring languages in *Second Life*.

### Lilju's Language Lessons

Join this group to practice your French with Lilju. He conducts regular meetings via voice chat in *Second Life*.

### The Bella Vida Jazz Club

Listen to some jazz music (broadcasted live via the internet on Saturday nights) and meet real people from all over the world. Spanish and Italian are the primary languages spoken here.



*The Bella Vida Jazz club in Second Life*

### Misia's German Lessons for Friends

This is a very informal German language group led by Artemisia Nikolaidis, a writer and painter from Germany. She holds occasional meetings and emails members weekly lessons.

## Fun, Interesting or Helpful Language Web Sites

[www.WordReference.com](http://www.WordReference.com)

This is an collection of online translation dictionaries including but not limited to French, English, Italian and Spanish.

### La Bibliotheque Universelle

Visit <http://abu.cnam.fr/> to find hundreds of Public domain full texts of French authors like Honore de Bazac, Rene Descartes and Jules Verne!

### The German American Cultural Center

The German American Cultural Center at <http://cazoo.org/folksongs> hosts an astonishing collection of German folk song lyrics (in German). Many of them include background information, sheet music and recordings.

# PODCASTS

## German

### Germany Info Podcast

For the latest news on politics, culture and life, economics, science, the environment from Germany check out this podcast broadcasted by the German Embassy and the U.S. Consulates General. Podcasts are available on the website below as well as iTunes. [http://www.germany.info/relaunch/info/press/Germany\\_Info\\_Podcast.xml](http://www.germany.info/relaunch/info/press/Germany_Info_Podcast.xml)

### German Podcast

This podcasts gives its listeners free German lessons supplemented with a free transcript of the lesson available from <http://www.German-podcast.de>

## Chinese

### Jonzo's Chinese Cooking

The host of this podcast, Jonzo, is a fan of Chinese cooking, and claims that he can cook better than some Chinese people. He has decided to share his talent and his recipes in his podcast, Jonzos Chinese Cooking. New recipes should be online every few weeks or so.

### What's up Taiwan?

A weekly podcast about expats' life in Asia. Letting you know the ups and owns of Taiwan through fellow travelers, learn about this wonderful island from their experiences.



## Chinese

### Shanghai Bits

An exploration of the random that is a couple's life in Shanghai, China. Expect crazy stories, Chinese word of the day, Geek thoughts, and whatever else may be on their minds.

## Spanish

### !Klink! The Spanish Wine Podcast

Klink! is about people who enjoy Spanish wine. This podcast is a fusion of comedy, storytelling, food, wine, and travel. Join your hosts Jay and Eric on a weekly journey.

### Cuisine from Spain

Marina and Ben bring you all the best from one of the world's most exciting, natural, and healthy cuisines. Cooking tips, tapas, recipes, travel, vino and much more from the Madrid-based Spanish/English couple that also bring you 'Notes from Spain' and 'Notes in Spanish'.

## French

### Easy French Poetry

Listen to poetry written by Valéry, Rimbaud, Apollinaire, Verlaine and others on your ipod or online at [www.Learnfrenchinboston.com](http://www.Learnfrenchinboston.com). The website has helpful tutoring resources as well.

CHECK US OUT ONLINE!  
[WWW.NMU.EDU/LANGUAGES](http://WWW.NMU.EDU/LANGUAGES)



## DEPARTMENT OF MODERN LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES

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Knowledge of languages other than English and sensitivity to other cultures is becoming more important as we begin the twenty-first century. Efficient transportation and instantaneous communications make contact with people from around the globe more and more frequent and vital. Technological advances offer exciting new opportunities. Northern Michigan University's Department of Modern Languages and Literatures seeks to open doors to students in their wide-ranging pursuits through the study of languages and cultures.

## NORTHERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY'S LANGUAGE LAB

There's no doubt about it. Learning a new language is challenging. It's like starting to read, speak and write all over again—in some cases, with entirely different alphabets. Whether you are first-year student of Chinese or a third-year French student, students may need some extra resources to help them along. We have the audio CDs needed to complete their lessons. We have a nice collection of books, international news and entertainment programming and movies too. Most importantly, we have friendly and apt tutors that are more than willing to give students help that the other resources are unable to provide. The Language Lab is happy to help lan-

guage professors as well. Students may even need a nice quiet place to study or to try out their conversational skills with one of the tutors.

The Language Lab is located in Jamrich Hall, room 203.

Hours of operation:

Monday—10am-8pm

Tuesday—Thursday 10am-7pm

Friday—11am-2pm

Saturday—Closed

Sunday—3pm-7pm



Students studying in the Language Lab

