BERKELEY
LANGUAGE
CENTER
NEWSLETTER

PUBLISHED BY
Berkeley Language Center
B-40 Dwinelle Hall #2640
University of California, Berkeley
Berkeley, CA 94720-2640
Phone 510.642.0767
Fax 510.642.9183
blc@socrates.berkeley.edu

EDITOR
Victoria Williams
510.642.0767, Ext.19
victoria@socrates.berkeley.edu

DESIGNER
Orlando Garcia
space@uclink4.berkeley.edu

BERKELEY
LANGUAGE CENTER
http://blc.berkeley.edu

Claire Kramsch
Director
510.643.5136

Mark Kaiser
Associate Director
510.642.7221

SERVICES
510.642.0767
Administrative Services Ext.10
Classroom Services Ext.19
Duplication Services Ext.29
Library Services Ext.24
Recording Studio Ext.12
Technical Services Ext.14

LANGUAGE TEACHING AT BERKELEY

VOLUME NO. 17 ISSUE NO. 1 FALL 2001

A CONVERSATION WITH CATHERINE DOUGHTY

by Richard Kern
Associate Professor of French

Catherine Doughty is Associate Professor of Second Language Studies at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. Richard Kern of the Department of French spoke with her in April 2001.

RK: How did you first get interested in languages and, ultimately, in second language acquisition (SLA) research? I assume that interest in languages came first?

CD: I was a language major at the University; I studied French and Spanish. When I graduated, French was my best language but I didn't think I wanted to be a French teacher. So I went into a different area, biomedical research, as I had also done quite a bit of that at University, and that was the first job that came up. I did that for about two years until it became uninteresting as I was only a technician. I had learned everything I could and had come to the point where I had to decide what to do next. Basically, I needed to go to graduate school. I was tossing around the idea of staying in the biomedical field or going back to something related to languages. The interesting thing about being a technician was that I got a lot of training in empirical research, which I found very valuable and interesting. I was working at the University of Pennsylvania then so I went to find out how to become a French teacher, because that was the only option I knew of. The department told me, "Well, you could do that, but you may not get a job, so why don't your go see Nessa Wolfson in the Educational Linguistics Department and get another credential in English as a Second Language (ESL)." When Nessa described the career to me, it sounded so interesting and appealing that I decided to pursue it. The very first courses I took in language teaching methodology and Second Language Acquistion (SLA) got me very interested. You could follow the SLA line or a more sociolinguistic line with Nessa. At the time it was a very small department and, of course, everybody did everything, although you did concentrate in one area or the other. I found myself more interested in the SLA side of things and I was very influenced by the experimental work I had just done. So, that's how I fell into it. I began doing some ESL teaching, I went to Japan a few times and taught there, and continued on with the Ph.D. in SLA.

RK: So your research interests really did grow out of your teaching experience and not just your experience as a student.

CD: I'm going to talk about that a little bit today because when I started there was a huge rift between teachers and SLA researchers, and I feel that the rift exists to some extent still, although things are a lot better now. My interest grew out of my frustration with SLA researchers who were saying that there was nothing that teachers could do. It was the heyday of Steve Krashen's thinking and of people like Sascha Felix who were saying that the best thing a teacher could do was not to impede SLA, but to try to set up a classroom environment that was like naturalistic SLA. I thought to myself, "Well, what's the point of that?"

RK: Probably not terribly useful advice for a teacher who's just starting out...

CD: True. And it just didn't seem practical. It didn't seem to be very efficient and I found that frustrating. But I was impressed by people like Mike Long and Terry Pica who were doing real classroom research and making it a serious endeavor. I found it quite appealing to be able to introduce a bit of rigor into the research that was being done in the classroom. I like taking an empirical approach to practical issues in the classroom. But it's really hard because classrooms are very messy places: variables go uncontrolled and all of that. So I find that I have to go back and forth. My dissertation was very experimental, delivered on a computer, everything controlled, and intentionally so. There were some very good

IN THIS ISSUE

A Conversation with Catherine Doughty 1
BLC Outreach 6
Notes from the Director....... 7
Notes from the Associate Director................. 8
BLC Fellows' Reports 9
Lecturer Report................... 13
From the Bookshelf............. 14
Calendar 19

things about that, but at the end of it all, you start to think, "Well, okay, fine for this context, but you can't really say too much about the classroom from this context." So then I started some intact classroom research on Focus on Form and that's really fun, challenging, and interesting, even though there are so many variables that go uncontrolled there. So I think you have to do both; you have to go back and forth, try things out empirically, in a controlled fashion, go to the classroom, do a similar thing, and then look for converging findings. There's no perfect way to do it. It's going to take a large body of research from at least those two perspectives and of course, there are lots of other perspectives as well, until we really know what's going on?

RK: Let's talk about Focus on Form a little bit. You are one of the major names associated with Focus on Form. What is it and how is it different from traditional form-based approaches to language teaching?

CD: That's a good question because the term is very misleading and has caused a lot of problems. The easiest way to start is to explain what Focus on Form is a reaction to. It's a reaction to what you could call a focus on meaning only, which is the product of the communicative language teaching revolution that happened in the mid-1970s. Most people who were trained in language teaching, including me, from the mid 1970s to the mid-1980s, were trained that way. Never pay attention to grammar–it was communicative language teaching all the way–don't pay attention to any linguistic aspects, just try to set up a communicative goal or a purposeful function. We could call that focus on meaning, which was a reaction to Focus on Forms, with an 's', and that's what we think of as traditional grammar-oriented language teaching, which was the predominant methodology for hundreds of years.

RK: So Focus on Form is kind of a middle-of-the-road approach? Or how would you characterize it?

CD: It's not a middle-of-the-road approach, either. The best way to define it would be to say that Focus on Forms is when attention is paid to linguistic code features in isolation, so discrete point exercises & drills are the worst-case examples as is giving a rule without any meaningful context. We do know that that doesn't work; that is one thing we know from research. We know that focus on meaning is as I described it, never drawing attention to linguistic form in a metalinguistic or explicit way. Examples of that would be immersion or content-based teaching where the fundamental concern of the teacher is to facilitate comprehension and very little attention is paid to accuracy. That, actually, is quite an effective approach to language teaching, as we know from all the Canadian research on immersion. Canadian researchers are funded, and they have twenty years of research to show that students who go through immersion programs do really well, far better than do students in the Focus on Forms programs. Immersion program students are very good, almost native-like, in comprehension, in listening ability. The problems that remain are in accuracy and production. That's what Focus on Form tries to address. Take what you get from focus on meaning–so part of the definition of Focus on Form is a focus on meaning–but then introduce a shift of attention to those areas that are not yet native-like. They may never be native-like but at least try to improve them.

[Focus on Form] is a reaction to what you could call focus on meaning only...

RK: So it presupposes comprehension on the learner's part?

CD: Yes. What's necessary psycholinguistically is that the learner is engaged in the process of meaning. What does that mean? It means that the learner is aware of the meaning component of the language processing in terms of production or comprehension. The message is there and being processed at the time that the attention to form is provided, and that attention to form should not interrupt the processing of meaning. So you can't just stop and then for three days talk about how you do third person singular 's'. It has to be something that is relatively short-term–brief is one way of describing it–although it's not yet clear how brief.

RK: What would this look like in the classroom? Can you give us an example of what kind of task or activity would be used, and how the form and the meaning would be brought together?

CD: Right now there's a lot of discussion of Focus on Form in the context of task-based language teaching, so that's one way to get the learner oriented toward meaning. You have a task that you have to accomplish and that task should be something that has been determined by a needs analysis, which I think is a very important component that people don't necessarily pay much attention to now. We think about needs analysis in terms of what the learners think they need or want to do. But we don't really have much empirical research in terms of what learners actually need to do with the L2 once they get out of the language classroom. Supposing that we did know what they needed to do, and they were doing what could be called pedagogic tasks that lead up to that kind of target task. That's the ideal kind of context for Focus on Form. Content-based teaching might also be a good example of that ideal context because there tend to be academic tasks that learners need to do in the L2. The easiest example of Focus on Form is something like a recast because a recast is very implicit, and it's not likely to interrupt the doing of the task at hand.

RK: An example of a recast would be...?

CD: Well, recasts are simply a reformulation of a learner utterance that has, ideally, only one or two problems. Researchers are starting to describe recasts in more detail now and so they can be called simple recasts or complex recasts. It seems that the simple recasts–addressing ideally one, but possibly two problems–are best. A researcher in first language acquisition named Saxton has something called the contrastive hypothesis, derived from work by Keith Nelson, who is also looking at recasting in first language acquisition. The idea is this: In the child situation, because the parent utterance is immediately contingent upon the child utterance, the child can keep both utterances in short-term working memory. The child makes a comparison–they call it a cognitive comparison–notices a difference, and then is able to change the child grammar. The idea is that that would work equally well for adults. They could notice, because of the contingency and because only one or two changes are being made, the difference between the interlanguage and the target language.

RK: Second language acquisition is known for its variability–in first language situations, everyone learns their native language, and in second language, it's just across the map. So, how do you deal with the fact that some learners may not be comprehending what's going on in the class–or that they may not be able to make that connection between the focus on the particular form and the meaning.

CD: In terms of the first question–are they comprehending what's going on–that's where something like task-based language teaching works out well because the idea is that you set up a series of pedagogic tasks that approximate the target task. That's the general approach, and where the individual teacher comes in is in knowing the level of the students, what it is they can do, and what kind of a task they can handle. Of course, some of these things have to be determined empirically by trying them out. But the teacher can make a really good guess. We're working on a project at University of Hawaii (UH) in Korean, where one of the tasks determined by needs analysis was being able to follow directions on the street in Korea. That may not be that innovative a problem, but the approach we're taking to it is a bit different. We get target discourse, native and non-native speakers asking for directions, which we then transcribe. We then work backward to develop pedagogic tasks leading up to that discourse. Giving and following directions is actually very complicated.

RK: Is this material recorded or written?

CD: It's recorded. We first record a number of different situations: Directions that are easy (location is nearby, there are few steps to getting there), and directions that are complex (place is far away, there are a number of steps to getting there, and the place can't be seen or pointed to). We're looking at aspects of complexity in that way rather than linguistically. Then you start the pedagogic task way back: just listening, listening, listening to the input without ever having to really do anything. Gradually you increase the complexity of the task–comprehension, the number of steps, and so forth–leading up to the target task. Then specific considerations come in. Is this task for Korean 101, for 202? Can the learners be expected to able to read anything in Korean? You still have to think about the teaching context, even though this model should probably work for any type of class. Back to your original question, part of making sure that the students can comprehend is your having experience with that type of class, or doing the actual analysis of what goes on in that level of classroom, so you make sure that the tasks fit the level of comprehension. There are always comprehension checks in these tasks. For example, after they do all the listening, they then start with really simple maps, tracing the route. Every so often you ask, "Where are you?" and make sure they're understanding.

RK: You get feedback all along as to whether they're understanding?

CD: Even though you're not asking them to produce anything, you're checking to see that they comprehend. That's just a small example; we're only just starting this work and it's a very simple example, but that is a very important point. You need to make sure that they're comprehending.

> The problems that remain are in accuracy and production. That's what Focus on Form tries to address.

Checks have to be built into the tasks. Your second question was how were they going to notice the Focus on Form. That's still an empirical question, whether or not they do, so I can't really answer it definitively. There are some studies of recasts in both first and second language acquisition, which are showing that recasts are noticed and the evidence of that, in first language acquisition, is this. First of all, parents don't really say anything after their children talk, most of the time, so when the parent says something, right away that's a bit noticeable. Something like sixty percent of the time a parent does not follow the child utterance with a parent utterance. Forty percent of the time they do and they'll do various things. Sometimes they'll repeat what the child said. The child doesn't seem to do anything. But the times that the parent gives a recast, the children almost always repeat the recast, which is taken as evidence of noticing. Not necessarily that they've acquired that feature, at that particular time, but they've at least noticed it. And adults... Actually, that study hasn't been done: Without any intervention, do adults just tend to repeat? Some people have looked in the classroom to see what happens, and there's a problem there in that the teacher often takes the next turn. It's not possible for the student to give that kind of evidence of noticing. Most of the studies so far have been more experimental, to see if there's any impact on a delayed posttest.

RK: What does this look like in terms of the syllabus? Focus on Forms would be sort of a traditional syllabus based on language forms, from forms perceived to be simplest to those that are perceived to be more difficult, but how do you deal with a Focus on Form syllabus?

CD: ... in terms of sequencing? That's a good question because Focus on Form completely eschews the idea that you can do that with forms, because we don't really know how to define forms in terms of complexity, even linguistically, let alone psycholinguistically.

If you're thinking in the task-based realm, your sequencing decision will be based on the complexity of the task. Peter Robinson and others are doing a lot of work in the area of defining the complexity of the task, asking questions like, How many steps are involved in the task? How many items do you have to comprehend? How many modes do you have to operate in at the same time? Those would be ideas for doing some studies on what constitutes the complexity of a task. And the syllabus would then be organized around task complexity. The hypothesis is that the complexity of the language will increase with the complexity of the task demands. But that is still a hypothesis yet to be tested although some doctoral students are starting to work on it.

RK: At Hawaii?

CD: Yes. And if you're thinking about a content-based syllabus, for example, then the content will determine the complexity–what's more or less complex in terms of the material that's being comprehended. The idea with Focus on Form, then, is that it is not what is going to determine the syllabus. It is a pedagogical intervention that you do to assist with the faster and more efficient development of accuracy in the L2. It's not really a part of the syllabus sequencing issue. The only thing that may be relevant there is knowing something about developmental sequence research and knowing, for example, that this is something that you should not be attending to right now because the learner isn't ready. But other than that, it's not part of the sequencing decision.

The easiest example of Focus on Form is something like a recast...

RK: Are there aspects of language that don't lend themselves well to this? Or maybe we should put it the other way around. Are there aspects that lend themselves better than others to a Focus on Form approach?

CD: There are a lot of arguments about this, and I think the jury is still out on some of them. For example, one debate is whether one should attend to simple things first, then complex things later, and we're still stuck with the idea, or the problem of defining that. But assuming you come up with a satisfactory definition, it would make sense, if you're thinking in terms of efficiency, to target the complex things and let the learner figure out the simple things. But that might not work psycholinguistically. I don't know the answer to that question, I really don't. It does seem to be the case that things that learners are not ready for are not going to be amenable to attention, but I don't know if there's a linguistic determiner of that. There are some people that argue things like it's more important to attend to probabilistic rules rather than categorical rules because categorical rules are easier to figure out. So that's one possibility.

RK: I was thinking, for example, about pronunciation. Traditionally, the way you get at this is having students repeat, repeat, repeat until they can get their ears and muscles properly tuned so they can really pronounce these new sounds. Is there any evidence that, for example, just bringing their attention to this sound, this configuration of sounds, and the meaning, that you can short-circuit this process?

CD: I don't know of any studies attempting to modify pronunciation in Focus on Form. It's an interesting question and it might be the most difficult area because of critical period effects. So that's a consideration, but I don't think that means that one shouldn't try, even if you are convinced by critical period theory and you say that this person will never have native-like pronunciation. That doesn't mean the pronunciation can't be improved. I think it would be worth trying, but I don't know of any studies of Focus on Form in pronunciation in particular. Most of them are on word order and morphology. At the other end of the spectrum is the idea of pragmatics. Somebody at UH is just starting to look at that issue: Can you use Focus on Form in the area of pragmatics?

RK: Are there other factors, from your research, that seem to have to be in place for a Focus on Form approach to work? Things like contextual factors, or other things that need to be set in place?

CD: Well, I think that's true for any pedagogical intervention, so I do think that you have to think about the particular context: What's going to work in that context? The most extensive study I did was with Elizabeth Varela, a doctoral student at the time, who is now on the faculty of the University of Maryland. She was a teacher in a content ESL class and I wanted to do a study on recasting in a content-based class because I thought that it was the ideal environment in which to try it. And she refused! So, first of all, you have to get the cooperation of the teacher. She had been trained never to teach grammar, never to correct. I asked her to read a bit of the recasting literature in L1 studies, which she did. She came back saying, "You know, I think I'm willing to try this because I've been feeling a little bit guilty about how my students have to go back into the mainstream. They're going to have to compete against native-speakers, and they're not that accurate. I know that that affects the judgment of the other teachers."

That discussion of whether or not it would be a good idea to try to work on accuracy in that type of classroom took some time. Of course, she was also concerned about whether this was going to interrupt the way she normally taught her class. She tried out recasting on a different class to see if it seemed natural to her, and when it turned out to be quite natural, she became really enthusiastic about it. Now she teaches other teachers how to do recasting. The teacher's philosophy and approach was important: she wanted to work on her students' accuracy, while also working toward the primary goal in that program. It was a very high-level science program; the kids were to primarily learn science and learn English only incidentally. That was the philosophy of the program and she didn't want to contravene it. And I don't think one needs to go against program objectives, so that was very important.

The final consideration is the students: they can be affected by a particular technique. Focus on Form can be realized in so many different ways. Even a recast can be realized in many different ways. What we decided would happen in her class was that they would continue to do what they normally do, which was to run experiments, and that she would do the recasting in the context of the experiments. She would recast all the time, no matter what was going on–group work, whole class sessions, one-on-one. A couple things happened. One was that she noticed that they started asking her to comment on what they were doing. They would say, "Well, I know, but am I doing the experiment right?" So she realized that she had forgotten to give the normal kind of teacher feedback in a content classroom that things were going well with the content. Also, if she would recast a particular student too many times, in a concentrated fashion, then they would start to roll their eyes.

RK: In other words, if she came back with a recast in succession, one after another...

CD: If she kept on recasting, almost badgering a particular student, they would roll their eyes. She became sensitive to that. They often would give reports in front of the class and be videotaped and then they would look at their videotapes–a common technique. She decided not to recast during any case where they were speaking alone in front of a large group. But she did recast the videotape. They played a tape and they talked about all sorts of things: Is your presentation organized? But then also she would recast and that was okay because it wasn't interrupting what they normally did. The students can give you these signals that the technique is going over the top. She was very sensitive to that and in the first two or three days she altered her approach. Is that the kind of thing you had in mind?

RK: Yes. Just to follow up on that, and to broaden it a bit, what do you see as some of the obstacles in the implementation of Focus on Form on a very widespread basis? Is teacher education a crucial factor there?

CD: One thing that has happened, unfortunately, is that quite a few people mistake the term for being a kind of a justification for going back to traditional grammar teaching. I think that's a big problem right now. People think Focus on Form means they can go back to their old grammar lessons, which is not the case at all. That misapprehension can be resolved by teacher education. Otherwise, I don't really see any problems. There needs to be more empirical research, of course, before we can say that Focus on Form really works, but that's true of any kind of pedagogical intervention. As you were saying, other issues are important–sequencing of the syllabus or determining the nature of the syllabus. If it's not going to be forms oriented, then that's a very important decision because Focus on Form doesn't go with a linguistic syllabus. It has to be something else; it has to be a process syllabus, a task-based syllabus, or a content syllabus. It's very important to understand the design of that type of a syllabus.

> People think Focus on Form means they can go back to their old grammar lessons, which is not the case at all.

Focus on Form is just the technique to work on accuracy. I still have a lot of questions about when we should we be using that technique. Should we wait, as in the Canadian case, until grades 10, 11, and 12 and start doing Focus on Form after they've already got this high degree of fluency and other abilities, or should we do Focus on Form all along the way, right from the start? Obviously, students can get quite far without any attention to form, as shown in the Canadian program. But that takes a long time. They have sometimes seventy-five percent of their day in the L2 for twelve years. I guess those are the best-case situations and we don't have much like that at all in the United States. It could be that Focus on Form would be more efficient in the context that we have, which is less time in the L2. I think those are wide-open questions right now.

RK: Cathy, to end on a broad note here... What do you see as some of the major research issues in second language acquisition, now in the 21st century? Where would you like to see things go in second language acquisition research?

CD: That's a big question. Well, personally, I'm interested in things like psycholinguistic processing of language, looking at issues of attention, noticing, cognitive comparison. That's what I'd like to concentrate on, but that's just a very narrow part of the whole question of SLA. The big issues are these: Is there a critical period? Is there Universal Grammar (UG) in first language acquisition? And it's starting to look like there may be something like that–an innately endowed kind of biologically timed process for children. Is there any access to that on the part of adults? I think that's an interesting question. I believe there is something innate that we have when we learn our first language, and what's left of that or what influence that may have on second language acquisition interests me. Even if you don't define it the way UG linguists define it now–it could be defined more cognitively–I think it's really interesting area.

We need to develop more techniques for measuring what's going on during brain processing and I think that will happen soon. Although, I did sit in on a couple courses at Georgetown in the neuroscience program and those scientists were saying that the technology is not ready yet for answering these questions that we have. Measurements are still too gross: you don't really know what's going on, you don't know what's connected to what. I think that's key. What's happening during comprehension processes? How is language organized in the brain? Do we have sets of examples that we draw on? Do we have things that look like rules?

cont page 8

BLC OUTREACH

by Jean Schultz, Lecturer and Language Coordinator, French Department, and BLC Academic Coordinator

Having just completed my first year as Academic Coordinator for the Berkeley Language Center, I must say that the position has been filled from start to finish with stimulating undertakings. This semester the position has defined itself as essentially tripartite in nature, involving participation in the decision-making process of the BLC Executive Committee, supporting the BLC Fellows as they work on their research projects, and continuing the language coordinator meetings.

Perhaps one of the most insightful aspects of attending BLC Executive Committee meetings has been witnessing the dedication of its members to the fostering of language learning, not only on the Berkeley campus, but also throughout the UC system and beyond. The recent creation of the UC Consortium for Language Learning and Teaching, whose mission is to foster collaboration among all campuses and all language groups, is but one dramatic example of the extent to which language learning and teaching is perceived as essential for full participation in an increasingly multicultural world. Closer to home, issues faced by faculty in individual departments are also of concern to the Executive Committee. For example, this last semester we discussed the situation in some of the departments of less commonly taught languages where faculty can feel disconnected from current research in language acquisition and SLA theory because their basic teaching resources, if they even exist, can become quickly outdated. A question we grappled with, therefore, was how the BLC can help facilitate the continuing development of language programs.

One of the most exciting aspects of my Academic Coordinator responsibilities has been the review and selection of the BLC Fellows for the coming academic year. The number and quality of the project submissions makes the review process a challenging undertaking but one that is ultimately very rewarding. This coming year we will all be working in support of projects from a range of departments and with a variety of research questions in mind. Amelia Barili from the Department of Spanish and Portuguese will be experimenting with methodologies for teaching grammar and composition to advanced-level students. Josephine Kelso in Education will be working with the interpretation of texts. Lynne Frame in German will be developing a culture and communication course with a business emphasis. Karina Sliwinski, also from German, will be working toward an intermediate-level pedagogy of performance using a play by Dürrenmatt. Along these same lines, Sarah Roberts from the Department of French will be developing a drama-based advanced intermediate French course. As can be seen from the description of this coming fall semester's projects, there are numerous interrelationships that should lead to positive collaboration among the participants. Moreover, despite the breadth of pedagogical interests represented, each project holds important implications for language teaching in general, not just within the Fellows' own departments. Sarah Robert's project, for which she drew inspiration from a BLC-sponsored workshop given by Dr. Elektra Tselikas, is just one example of the tangible results of the BLC workshops and projects. Boris Wolfson's project, which was carried out last spring semester and involved a statistical study of the computerized Russian quizzes developed through BLC support, served as inspiration for a similar project for French, which I am currently working on with help from Mark Kaiser.

The monthly language coordinator meeting continues to be a very positive format for fostering collaboration and the sharing of language teaching and learning concerns. This past semester we continued the focus on issues of oral proficiency, the content of the 300-level pedagogical seminars, and language assessment. Toward the end of the semester we also touched on the teaching of writing in the foreign language curriculum, a topic that we will continue with this coming fall semester. We will, however, be moving to a new format, alternating the discussion of specific topics of immediate pedagogical concern with a reading-group format wherein we will discuss a recently published theoretical work. Balancing the responsibilities of teaching, coordination and administration, and curricular design with the desire and need to keep up with the constant developments in SLA theory and Applied Linguistics involves a continual juggling act. Creating a collaborative structure for an ongoing exploration of up-to-date research in the field should prove an interesting and efficient means for keeping abreast of new theoretical developments, for evaluating the relevance of the findings to the realities of directing language programs, and for continuing our own ongoing professional growth.

During the coordinators' meetings one of the issues that surfaced as a major concern to all was the assessment of language students' progress as they move from one level to the next. Part of the impetus for the discussion came from the current interest in Title VI funding possibilities and Dean Ralph Hexter's request that language departments develop assessment protocols. During our meetings, therefore, we discussed different types of testing procedures, the various assessment vehicles available, and the pros and cons of each. We also shared the assessment proposals set forth by different language departments. The forum has been useful in helping to formulate testing policies. Moreover, the discussion has directly fed into the BLC sponsorship of a two-day colloquium to be held this coming fall on the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI), its usefulness as an assessment vehicle, and its implications for curricular development.

cont next page

NOTES FROM THE DIRECTOR

by Claire Kramsch

On behalf of the Berkeley Language Center, I wish to welcome you to the new academic year! The teaching of foreign languages is the object of renewed interest these days both in California and in Europe. The University of California, seeing in foreign and heritage languages a major national resource, last year founded the UC Consortium for Language Learning and Teaching to better synchronize language teaching efforts across the UC system. On the other side of the Atlantic, Europeans have been celebrating the year 2001 as the "Year of Languages," and language learning is booming in Europe. It is a pleasure to be a language teacher these days.

I want to welcome particularly the five BLC research fellows this fall: graduate students Josephine Kelso (Education), Sarah Roberts (French), and Karina Sliwinski (German), and lecturers Amelia Barili (Spanish), and Lynne Frame (German). They have most interesting research projects, from the interpretation of literary texts at the high school level to the use of theater and drama in second year college French and German, to the teaching of writing in third year Spanish, and Business German. You will hear about all those projects at the Fellows' Forum on December 7, 2001.

The BLC is offering again this fall a rich program of lectures and workshops for the language teaching community, starting with an exciting two-day workshop on September 14-15, 2001. The workshop will explore the uses of Oral Proficiency Testing to improve not only the way we evaluate, but also the way we teach foreign languages. This is a unique event and one that is sure to give you great ideas for your classroom. I hope to see very many of you there.

The UC Consortium ran a successful professional development workshop on July 9-13, 2001, at UCSB entitled "Using Technology for Language Learning and Teaching." Berkeley participants were Sam Mchombo (Linguistics, African languages) and Françoise Sorgen-Goldschmidt (French). In summer 2002, the workshop will be on the teaching of heritage languages, and in summer 2003, on the teaching of language and culture. I encourage you to sign up for these workshops when the time comes.

Finally, I want to attract your attention to the first UC Conference on Foreign Language Learning, organized by the UC Consortium on March 8-10, 2002 at UC Irvine and open to all language teachers within the UC system. I strongly encourage you to submit proposals and give a presentation at that conference.

With all my best wishes for a good and fruitful semester.

BLC Outreach cont

Mark Kaiser and I have been working since last spring semester on the organization of the colloquium on the OPI, which, as indicated above, is the direct result of the coordinators' meetings. The colloquium falls at a most opportune moment in terms of campus-wide interests in the teaching and learning of foreign languages on multiple dimensions. Because the OPI has both a significant track record as a useful vehicle for the evaluation of spoken language, its relevance to Title VI issues is important to consider. Moreover, since the OPI holds definite implications for curricular development, it is of great interest to those directly involved in the teaching of foreign language. This fall's colloquium is also timely in terms of a full American Council of Teachers of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) OPI tester training workshop to be held on the Berkeley campus July 18-21, 2002. Agnes Dimitriou has been working in conjunction with the Office of Professional Development of ACTFL to set up the OPI training workshop, which will be open to all those who wish to register for it. The fall OPI colloquium will also thus serve as an introductory precursor to the training workshop.

The fall OPI colloquium is shaping up as a very full two days of language discussion. On the afternoon of Friday, September 14, Chantal Thompson from Brigham Young University will be starting the colloquium off with a general presentation on the OPI. Immediately following, a number of break-out sessions demonstrating live OPI interviews in various languages will be available for participants. On Saturday we will have a number of presentations on various OPI topics. Ben Rifkin from Middlebury College will be addressing the curricular implications of the OPI. June Phillips will be speaking on the interconnections between the OPI and the recently published Foreign Language Standards. Ray Clifford from the Defense Language Institute, Monterey will be discussing various types of assessment, distinguishing between achievement, performance, and proficiency testing. Leo van Lier from the Monterey Institute of International Studies will be addressing the limitations of the OPI from a sociological perspective. Finally, Raphael Salaberry from Rice University will discuss the limitations of the OPI from a language policy perspective. As can be seen from this brief description, the topics should provide ample material for an intellectual dialogue centered on the important issues involved in language assessment.

❦

NOTES FROM THE ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

by Mark Kaiser

Welcome to the beginning of the 2001-2002 academic year. The staff of the Berkeley Language Center looks forward to working with faculty, graduate student instructors, and students to make language learning as successful as possible on the Berkeley campus.

Over the past six to twelve months, audio and video have become commonplace on websites. Once limited to text and then extended to graphic images, the Internet has acquired a voice through the application of streaming audio and video technologies, telephony, and audio and video broadcasting. It is now possible to listen to foreign radio on the Net, to make international phone calls, and to watch foreign films. Audio is being integrated into learning management systems, and increasingly is a component of language learning sites.

The Berkeley Language Center is also involved in the development and application of audio on the Internet. This summer we configured computers in the PC lab in 134 Dwinelle to enable students in Sharon Jones' ESL 9 class to send voice attachments to their email, and we have been assisting Françoise Sorgen-Goldschmidt to develop an extensive website with audio and video clips. For some time Chinese language students have be able to listen to various audio clips through their WebCT site.

We have also taken steps to make our extensive collection of archived materials available over the Internet. The BLC holds in archive approximately 1000 hours of field recordings of Native American languages and music, and an additional 375 hours of recordings deposited but not yet archived. Over the past three years, working in collaboration with the UC Berkeley Museum Informatics Project, the underlying database for the Internet-based catalog was created and populated with catalog data and content descriptions (http://blc.berkeley.edu/collections.htm). The BLC purchased a high-end sound card for digitization, and we created a directory structure and file naming convention for the new digitized files. We have begun digitizing parts of the collection, transferring data from 10" reel-to-reel tapes to .wav files stored on large hard drives and backed up to CD-ROM. The BLC is one of the first institutions to begin to archive audio in digital format.

This spring the BLC submitted a $175,000 proposal to the National Endowment for the Humanities to support the transfer of the bulk of the Language and Music Archives to digital format over a two-year period, and to allow direct access to parts of the collection over the Internet, thus facilitating access to this rich collection by both researchers and Native Americans seeking to learn their heritage languages.

Please join me in welcoming Gina Hotta to the Berkeley Language Center. Gina took over the Recording Studio Supervisor responsibilities from Alex Prisadsky, who retired on June 30th. Alex was with the University for 27 years, and we wish him many years of productive retirement in Minneapolis.

Catherine Doughty cont

Is it a spreading-activation network or is something more modular? So, that's what interests me in purely SLA terms. And I also continue to be very interested in what works in the classroom. What other areas of SLA do you think of?

RK: Well, one thing I'm interested in is how social and cultural factors interact with the kinds of psycholinguistic aspects you were talking about, and how they can have an impact on what sorts of interpretations students generate.

CD: I think that's really important. What needs to happen in that area is that people tend to look at language use with the assumption–and this also happens in the Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) area–with the general belief that the more language is used, the more it will be acquired. That may or may not be true but it's certainly far too simplistic. I think that in language use studies as well as in CALL or any of the technology-based studies that go on now, you have to get past that belief. You have to connect the use of language to measures of acquisition. So, yes, I think those are important factors, and that would be what I would look for next in that area: How do you document how that type of language use relates to acquisition processes?

RK: Thanks so much for this interview, Cathy.

CD: It's a pleasure. It's a fun topic.

Performance and Placement: Designing a Plan for Testing in the Undergraduate Russian Program

by Lisa Little,
Lecturer and Language Coordinator,
Department of Slavic
Languages and Literatures

In September 1999, when Mark Kaiser (Associate Director of the BLC) and I were just beginning our formative testing project, I was asked by the Acting Chair of the Slavic Department to respond to a letter from the Dean requesting information on how we tested student performance in our classes. A week later the Assistant Director of the Institute for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies asked if I could help write the section on language assessment for their Title VI renewal application. For the first time, it seems, the Department of Education Title VI was requiring each applicant to provide plans for the development of performance-based tests in all languages supported by their Area Centers. I decided to apply for a BLC fellowship so that I could devise a workable plan that would allow us to provide funding institutions with the information they seek while also benefiting our students.

I believed that assessment should be relevant to our students; help improve student performance, not just audit it; provide incentives and aims for the students; include some form of self-assessment; be continuous as well as fixed-point (i.e. not just at the end of the semester); strike a balance between achievement and proficiency, communicative performance and linguistic knowledge; produce a positive "wash back" effect (i.e. encourage positive rather than negative changes in the curriculum); and provide accountability. Even more important, I felt that any plan should combine various forms of assessment. Just as there are many different kinds of learners, there are different kinds of test takers, and no such thing as a perfect test.

The most important consideration for my department was not to do anything to jeopardize our enrollments. Having an ACTFL-certified OPI tester on campus was a key aspect of the assessment plan for our area center. The results of a questionnaire I wrote and administered to the students showed that around one-half were in favor of some form of self-assessment and portfolio with the other half strongly against. Approximately two-thirds wanted a standardized test at the end of the semester with the task-based type–the most performance-based of the choices listed–clearly being the least popular. The Foreign Language Test Database on the Center for Applied Linguistics website listed six tests in Russian. Of these, one had been discontinued, two were in very early stages of development, and others were not adequate or appropriate. An informal survey of my colleagues at other universities indicated that most write their own tests to fit their programs.

I tried to come up with a balanced approach to assessment that would encourage both day-to-day and lifetime learning by our students; enable me, my TAs, and my department to assess the quality of our language program and compare our students' gains from one semester to the next; and allow us to demonstrate our students' language ability to the outside world, when needed, but on our own terms. The plan includes our computerized formative testing in Slavic 1 and 2; mostly voluntary self-assessment checklists (possibly computerized with feedback); ongoing portfolio assessment of speaking and writing with a voluntary component to encourage individual projects; the listening, reading, and grammar/vocabulary sections of a new Russian Federation standardized exam of Russian as a Foreign Language (not listed on the CAL site or known to most of my colleagues but included in the Association of Language Testers of Europe and officially recognized by the European Union) to be administered during the final exam period; and selective Oral Proficiency Interviews (by ACTFL-certified graduate students from a new program sponsored by our area institute).

❦

Doing the Work of an Academic Writer: Evaluating Writing in College-prep English

by Beth Lewis Samuelson, Ph.D.
Candidate, School of Education

When I began ethnographic fieldwork this spring, my site was a senior high school Advanced Placement English classroom where the students were preparing for college writing. My guiding questions–What is good writing in this context? How do you become a good writer in this classroom?–helped direct my attention to the sheer volume of evaluative talk. Not only the usual subjects being evaluated, such as student texts and their student-owners, but also model texts, assigned readings, tests (there were plenty of them), entertainment, popular authors, the school, the vice-principal, and even the teacher. I became curious about the linguistic nature of this evaluative talk and its role in the daily instructional conversations. As a result, I developed the following research question: How are evaluative stances toward academic writing expressed in the habitual discourse of the students and the teacher as they appraise writing?

The participants in my study were thirty-three high school seniors, many of them linguistic minorities, and their teacher. I visited the class two days a week, took observational fieldnotes, tape-recorded and partially transcribed twenty-four class periods. For a preliminary analysis, I selected episodes of classroom discussion where the central focus was a student-written text.The theoretical basis for my project was drawn mainly from work by M.A.K. Halliday and J.R. Martin on functional linguistics and linguistic resources for expressing, negotiating, and naturalizing intersubjective stances. I focused first on linguistic resources for expressing appreciation of the esthetic quality of a text. Take for example an excerpt from a classroom episode. The teacher has handed back a practice essay on *The Metamorphosis*. She tells the students that "these are **big**...**big** ideas and when you wrote your papers some of you wrote something that was "smaller than big." I coded the phrases "**big** ... **big** ideas" and "smaller than big" as instances of appreciation, noting the use of repetition of big, and the paralinguistic features such as fortis enunciation and short pauses.

I also coded for linguistic resources used to express judgment of the student writers and to convey expected norms for their writing. For instance, in the continuation of the chunk of discourse I have selected here, the teacher goes on to tell the students, "and you just gotta stay with the **big** because you're under pressure." I cataloged the phrase, "you just gotta stay with the **big**," as an example of social sanction in the context of an essay testing situation.

Why do I think it is important to investigate evaluative stances? Much of the research investigating writing assessment focuses on the act of evaluation, and not on the discourse used to perform it. By defining evaluative stances as the use of linguistic resources to express appraisal, I hope to work beyond assessment as merely a stage of instruction or as the third part of an Initiation-Response-Evaluation (I-R-E) exchange (Martin 2001), and begin to describe how it permeates discourse.

❦

UC Survey on Heritage Language Instruction

by Nelleke Van Deusen-Scholl, Lecturer, Dutch Studies

While enrollments in several of the 'traditional' European foreign languages, such as French, German, and Russian, have declined in recent years, many of the less commonly taught languages, such as Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, are becoming increasingly popular. A major cause for this shift appears to be the interest among speakers of heritage languages to improve their language skills and to learn more about the culture of their parents or ancestors. As a result, foreign language departments at the college and university levels are beginning to take into consideration the issue of heritage language learning in planning their curricula. This BLC project was initiated in follow-up to my earlier work with the BLC Heritage Language Group and to a pilot survey that we had conducted at UC Berkeley in the fall of 1998. In order to gain a deeper insight into the issues that were raised in that survey, I wanted to extend my inquiries to the foreign language departments across the UC system and gather more comprehensive data and compare approaches to heritage language instruction.

The survey consisted of thirteen questions divided over three sections: (1) defining heritage students, (2) curriculum, and (3) pedagogy. The first item was an open-ended question that asked respondents to provide their own definition of heritage language learners. While there was considerable variation in the answers, many of the definitions centered on some core elements, which identified a heritage language learner as someone who:

- has had informal exposure to the language rather than formal instruction
- has an imperfect command of the grammar
- tends to be a passive bilingual; i.e. has stronger listening than speaking skills
- has had family or life experiences with the language
- may lack advanced literacy or academic writing skills
- may lack orthographic skills.

Not surprisingly, languages with large immigrant communities (e.g. Spanish, Chinese, Korean, etc), reported high percentages of heritage learners. The language programs indicated that they most often identified heritage speakers by means of an oral interview or by linguistic criteria (especially fluency and oral skills assessment). According to the language coordinators, the majority of the students were second or third generation immigrants, while fewer were from the first generation. In terms of their language skills, they were characterized as fluent, but lacking in grammatical accuracy, and having a high degree of cultural competence. In order of importance, their language experiences were at home with parents or grandparents, through visits to relatives abroad, and with the immigrant community, where appropriate. Their main motivation to learn the language was to connect or reconnect with the culture of their parents or ancestors, to develop their language skills, and to be able to communicate with their relatives.

The second section of the survey dealt with curriculum issues. With the exception of the Spanish for Native Speakers program, specific textbooks or materials are not yet available on a large-scale basis, although several programs indicated that they were in the process of developing them. The Internet plays an important role in connecting the communities with the classrooms through the availability of culture-specific websites and online publications. Several of the programs (e.g. Spanish, Russian, and Korean) reported that they had developed specific courses for heritage learners, while others had instituted two-track programs to separate heritage learners from 'traditional' foreign language learners.

The final section of the survey asked respondents to describe the pedagogical issues that they considered the most relevant for heritage language learners. The results indicate that the great degree of variation in language skills among these learners was perceived as by far the greatest problem. Lack of formal grammar skills was also cited as problematic. Academic literacy, i.e. acquisition of formal registers, was ranked third, while acquisition of orthographic skills was considered to be a much less significant issue.

Though collection of further data is needed–in particular a survey that directly elicits student responses to questions pertaining to motivation, language experiences, and cultural background–the survey yielded some interesting results. There appears to be a growing awareness of heritage language issues among the foreign language instructors and coordinators, and many of them are actively involved in developing appropriate courses, materials, textbooks, and testing procedures.

❦

The Role of Idiomaticity in the Acquisition of German Directional Prepositions

by Kevin Wiliarty, Ph.D. Candidate, Department of German

Few English speakers recognize the phrase 'go to a restaurant' as an idiom. Very often, however, we use it to refer to dining out rather than to a motion event. In fact, many English directional expressions with 'to' predicate activities associated with particular destinations. Examples include going to the post office, going to the bank, going to school, etc. Other equally plausible candidates for metonymic extension–such as going into a restaurant–do not conventionally elicit these idiomatic readings. Foreign language students must learn these systematic metonymies. The German expression for dining out, *ins Restaurant gehen*, has the compositional sense 'to go into a restaurant.' The literal expression for 'going to a restaurant'(*zu einem Restaurant gehen*), does not trigger an idiomatic reading. Depending on one's destination, German directional idioms require the prepositions *zu*, *in*, *auf*, *an* or *nach*.

My BLC project focuses on the acquisition of common German directional idioms. My broad hypothesis, drawing on insights from Second Language Acquisition and Cognitive Semantics, is that prepositional usage depends on a repertoire of well-rehearsed phrases rather than on rules as such. Last fall I analyzed a fill-in-the-blank test of idiomatic prepositional usage administered to German native, near-native and student speakers (levels 1-4). The results suggest that many learners use one or more of the following strategies directional preposition selection:
(1) Use a memorized phrase if it includes the appropriate destination.
(2) Use some preposition as a default.
(3) Avoid *zu* because it is an Anglicism.
These strategies do not always lead to idiomatically correct choices.

This spring, as a follow-up, I analyzed the results of an oral repetition test. This test, based on an illustrated narrative, consists of three phases:
(1) Repetition: Subjects look at illustrations and listen to sentences of the narrative. After listening to each sentence as often as they like, subjects repeat it as accurately as they can.
(2) Retelling: Using the drawings as cues, subjects retell the entire narrative in their own words.
(3) Self-assessment: I interview the subjects about their performance.

Most subjects, including native speakers, altered prepositions without realizing it, even on immediate repetition. Taken collectively, their changes confirm the cognitive strategies observed for the written test. All subject levels preferred memorized phrases and learners typically avoided zu, often favoring some other preposition as a default.

I conclude with the following observations:

- Language users, including (near-)native speakers, do not always hear what is said.
- Interlocutors are largely unaware that listening includes a creative component.
- Recognizing the role of creativity in listening, we may want to include some focus on form in our communicative curricula.
- Individual memorized expressions can have considerable influence on grammatical development. We may be able to take advantage of idiomatic learning in the language classroom.
- Discussing systematic idiomaticity with students could lead to consideration of the relationship between thought and language or to reflection on culturally conventionalized ways of thinking.

Formative Computer-based Testing in First-semester Russian: An Error Analysis

by Boris Wolfson, Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures

In the fall of 1999, Lisa Little, Lecturer in the Slavic Department, and Mark Kaiser, Associate Director of the BLC, initiated a formative computer-based testing program in first-year Russian. The usual high-stakes paper-and-pencil chapter quizzes were replaced by formative tests–that is, the students would be allowed to take each test up to three times, and only their best scores would count towards their grade in the class. The logistical challenge of administering multiple exams would be solved by computerizing the process. Switching to the computer would have the added benefit of uniformity and objectivity in administering the listening comprehension exercises and in grading student responses.

Two years later, the question is how well does this program accomplish its utopian vision of making exams meaningful learning experiences? As one of the graduate student instructors who have participated in developing and administering the tests, I was particularly curious what answers might be gleaned from one type of evidence–the test scores of students in first-semester Russian accumulated over the past four semesters.

My analysis concentrated on the grammar section of the eight unit quizzes. On the first attempt the students' scores were generally rather low, between 57 and 81 percentage points. On second attempt the improvement was noticeable, with the net change figures ranging between 4 and 10 percentage points. And on the students' third attempt the scores rose again, so that the average score improvement between the first and third attempts was as high as 19 percentage points (and even higher, 25 points, in some semesters). I also considered the time taken by the students to complete the grammar section. From the first attempt to the third the students were able to cut that time by about one-third in most cases.

But who was actually taking advantage of the opportunity to improve their score and–we hope–master the material? For the second attempt the number of students re-taking the test was very high–mostly in the 80th and 90th percentile. For the third attempt those numbers were quite a bit lower, but even so well more than half the students took the test all three times. I then broke down these test-taking rates according to the score received on the first attempt. The return rate was significantly higher for those students whose score on the first attempt was in the B and C range (between 70 and 90 percentage points).

This kind of macroanalysis of the data pointed me in the direction of two general conclusions. First, the students do seem to improve consistently their mastery of the material tested in the grammar section of the quiz. Second, the students who benefit most from the opportunities offered by multiple attempts are the students whose achievement would not be very high given one attempt only; and these students are consistently motivated to retake the test.

But what kinds of mistakes are these students likely to make, and are they, in fact, learning to correct these mistakes? To answer these questions I turned to the individual student responses. I focused on one unit quiz and classified student responses as exhibiting morphological, syntactical, lexical, or orthographic errors. Approximately half of the errors were morphological. This was far from surprising. Russian is a highly inflected language, and many test items had been specifically designed to test the students' declension and conjugation skills. At the same time, the high percentage of orthographic errors (around 20 percent) was significant, since most of these would probably not be counted as full errors on a paper-and-pencil test. There was an interesting development in the second-attempt numbers, however. If morphological and orthographic errors decrease by about one-fourth, the lexical and syntactical errors went down by no less than 50 percent! On third attempt the students eliminate and correct the morphological and orthographic errors more successfully than the lexical and syntactical.

My analysis suggests that this version of formative tests succeeds in motivating the students to learn consistently from their mistakes, especially those that involve morphology and orthography. Does relying on the computer entail too many limitations on the kinds of questions that would allow our students to improve their syntactical and lexical skills? I would like to suggest that this is, perhaps, not as much the case as we might expect. The three-attempt system allows us to gain an insight into the students' priorities in correcting their mistakes. The relatively sharper drop in lexical and syntactical errors on the second attempt suggests that even though the principal motivation for re-taking the test is improving one's grade, the learning strategy is to invest in correcting the more difficult mistakes first, even though fixing them may not necessarily result in the highest score. There is no question that designing appropriate lexical and syntactical exercises on the computer is much more challenging and time-consuming logistically. But the little I was able to glimpse from the saga of the uneasy co-habitation of the ghost and the machine suggests that computerized formative tests do have the potential for motivating the students to focus on the non-morphological tasks and for contributing to the students' mastery of all grammatical skills.

❦

2001-2002
BLC Title VI Travel Grants
Travel Funds for Foreign Language Lecturers
Applications due November 1, 2001

The BLC is able to offer moderate financial support for lecturers to attend conferences or other professional events related to the teaching of foreign languages. Priority will be given to those who will be presenting a paper. For further information and an application, contact Ina Evans, BLC Office Manager, at aablc@socrates.berkeley.edu or 642-0767 ext. 22. The application is available at http://blc.berkeley.edu/faculty.html

AATSP in San Francisco

by Agnes Dimitriou, Lecturer, Department of Spanish and Portuguese

From Thursday, July 5 to Monday, July 9, 2001, the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese (AATSP) held its annual conference at the Renaissance Parc Hotel on Cyril Magnin Street in San Francisco. The conference drew over six hundred participants and exhibitors. Workshops were held at the beginning of the conference, on Thursday and Friday, and special interest sessions continued through Monday.

Arrangements for the conference were facilitated by the active participation of local members of the organization. Milton Azevedo and Agnes Dimitriou of the Department of Spanish and Portuguese were the Program Chair and the Special Arrangements Chair, respectively. Others involved were Francisco Zermeño, Marilyn Imes, Carmel McDonnell, Victoria Williams, Laura Callahan, and Adelaida Cortijo. At the banquet on the evening of July 6, the new executive director of the organization, Carol Klein, took over from Lynn Sandstedt, who had served as director for the past eight years. In addition, the recipients of grants to study abroad were announced, as were the winners of the raffle for attendance at next year's conference in Rio de Janeiro.

At the President's Reception, Jeffrey Chin, a classical guitarist from the Bay Area, gave an excellent performance. At the banquet on Sunday evening, the Ballet Folkórico of Carlos Moreno, Hijo, gave an outstanding performance and received an enthusiastic ovation. It was gratifying to see artists from our area being so well received.

A conference such as this one provides a forum for the myriad aspects of the field that language teaching professionals might wish to learn about. To mention only a few areas, sessions touched on the teaching of language, proficiency standards in relation to instruction at different levels, research on linguistic topics, as well as new and exciting interpretations of literature. Let me encourage all teachers of Spanish and Portuguese, as well as of other languages and literatures, to consider attending and presenting at a national conference such as AATSP.

❦

The Language Media Center deadline for new materials for spring 2002 is December 15, 2001.

Contact Marianne Garner at 642-0767, Ext. 24 to discuss acquiring language learning materials for your spring semester classes.

If you would like to schedule the use of Language Media Center facilities for the spring semester, contact Victoria Williams at 642-0767, Ext. 19.

FROM THE BOOKSHELF

N. Katherine Hayles.
How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature and Informatics
University of Chicago Press, 1999.

by David Pettersen,
Ph.D. Candidate,
Department of French

N. Katherine Hayles' latest book, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*, is a tour de force of interdisciplinary studies which proves that it is possible to freely move between subjects as diverse as information theory, philosophy, the history of science, and literary studies, in a way that is engaging, understandable, and ultimately very meaningful. Hayles' book traces her book's inception to a question raised by Hans Moravec's book, *Mind Children: The Future of Robot and Human Intelligence*. At a certain point, Moravec argues that at some future moment, it will inevitably be possible to download human consciousness into a computer. Hayles writes that she was struck by the naive assumption on the part of an extremely intelligent man that human consciousness could emerge unchanged from such a downloading process. Hayles was even more shocked to discover that Moravec is not alone in his beliefs, but rather one of many who believe that information (of which human consciousness is but a sub-category) can freely circulate between and independent of its specific material forms, what Hayles terms "material substrates." Her book sets out to uncover the historical circumstances and choices that make this kind of thinking possible and also to prove that this way of conceiving information as bodiless and the effects of this thinking were not inevitable.

Hayles' book should interest not only historians of science and technology, but also literary scholars and those interested in language pedagogy. One of the main thrusts of her documentation of how information lost its body is a complementary desire to bring the reader back to an appreciation of the positive aspects of material instantiation. The logical extension of this desire, as the direction of Hayles' subsequent work indicates, is to apply this appreciation for material instantiation to signification and meaning more generally. Applied to literary texts, it becomes impossible to talk about the abstract text independently of its material embodiment. For example, the experience of reading *The Death of King Arthur* in its illuminated medieval manuscript form is simply not the same as reading the modern printed edition. The language and literature teacher, then, cannot simply teach students to interpret what the abstract text means (text in the broadest sense of the word), but rather he or she must also help students see what the text means through its specific instantiation. From this general attention to and appreciation for the texts' material, specificity emerges as a more general notion of literacy that focuses on how different representational media create meaning, be they speech, image, sound, etc.

In order to transmit or translate information between different representational media (i.e. sound on a telegraph wire, record, speaker, etc.), the scientists had to develop a notion of information that is exact and whose fundamental structure remains identical and independent of its material instantiation. As Hayles notes, "the function of scientific language is exact specification...and an information concept that privileges exactness over meaning is therefore more suitable to model construction than one that does not" (67). Indeed it is only through this separation of meaning from information that allowed the scientists to theorize information in such a way that it could be transmitted through and represented in different media without altering its structure. On the other hand, for the literary scholar, the assertion that language is a fixed, precise, absolute system for the representation and communication of ideas should come as a shock and evoke some measure of protest. The majority of these same scholars would also object to the similar assertion that the translation of a literary text (or any text for that matter) from one language to another produces a version identical to the original. It is this sensibility of the literary scholar to language's inadequacies and imprecision which Hayles brings to the history of information theory that makes her book so illuminating. In recounting this history, she wants to show how much material embodiment had to be suppressed in order to arrive at such an abstract conception of information. As her history of information theory continues into cybernetics and artificial life, she continues to problematize this general tendency towards abstraction and she reinserts the questions of material specificity into these scientific discourses.

The history/theoretical portions of the book are divided into three general time periods: the birth, so to speak, of information as independent of its body during the 1940s and 1950s; the rise of systems theory and the conception of life as autopoietic (meaning that an organism's structure and organization determine the reality it experiences) during the 1960s and 1970s; and the more contemporary notions of artificial life and intelligence from the1980s on. Each treatment of these different periods of historical development is followed by a chapter in which Hayles explores the speculative fiction (science fiction) of the same period. She calls these novels "tutor texts" and uses them to explore the intellectual wrestling with these same theoretical and philosophical issues that occur within the novels. In this way, the theoretical framework whose development she is tracing is immediately applied to the illumination of literary texts. The level of sophistication and engagement with these theoretical

cont page 15

RECENT ADDITIONS TO THE BLC LIBRARY

Contrastive Rhetoric Revisited and Redefined by Clayann Gilliam Panetta (Editor)

Critical English for Academic Purposes: Theory, Politics, and Practice by Sarah Benesch

Designing Second Language Performance Assessments by John Norris et al.

Developing Korean Language Performance Assessments by James Dean Brown, Thom Hudson, Youngkyu Kim

Discourse and Context in Language Teaching by Marianne Celce-Murcia, Elite Olshtain

A Focus on Language Test Development: Expanding the Language Proficiency Construct Across a Variety of Tests by Thom Hudson (Editor), James Dean Brown (Editor)

Identity and Language Learning: Gender, Ethnicity and Educational Change by Bonny Norton

Language Acquisition and Conceptual Development (Language, Culture and Cognition 3) by Melissa Bowerman (Editor), Stephen C. Levinson (Editor)

Language Crossings: Negotiating the Self in a Multi-Cultural World (Language and Literacy, 53) by Karen Ogulnick (Editor)

Language Death by David Crystal

Language from the Body: Iconicity and Metaphor in American Sign Language by Sarah F. Taub

Language in Action: New Studies of Language in Society: essays in honor of Roger W. Shuy. Joy Kreeft Peyton et al. (Editors)

Literacy and Language Teaching (Oxford Applied Linguistics) by Richard Kern

Literacy Assessment of Second Language Learners by Sandra Rollins Hurley, Josefina Villamil Tinajero

Motivation and Second Language Acquisition by Zoltán Dörnyei (Editor), Richard Schmidt (Editor)

The Neurocognition of Language by Colin M. Brown (Editor), Peter Hagoort (Editor)

One Mind, Two Languages: Bilingual Language Processing (Explaining Linguistics) by Janet Nicol (Editor)

The Politics of Language: Conflict, Identity and Cultural Pluralism in Comparative Perspective by Carol L. Schmid

Pronoun Envy: Literary Uses of Linguistic Gender (Studies in Language and Gender) by Anna Livia

Rethinking Writing by Roy Harris

Second Language Acquisition: An Introductory Course by Susan M. Gass, Larry Selinker

Second Language Syntax: An Introduction by Roger Hawkins

Studies on Korean in Community Schools by Dong Jae Lee (Editor)

Unshadowed Thought: Representation in Thought and Language by Charles Travis

Words and Minds: How We Use Language to Think Together by Neil Mercer

The Words of Selves: Identification, Solidarity, Irony by Denise Riley

Writing Across Languages (Advances in Foreign and Second Language Pedagogy) by Gerd Brauer (Editor)

From the Bookshelf cont

issues and their implications that one finds in the science fiction from the different periods is astounding, and Hayles' keen critical eye and well-written prose make them very accessible to the non-specialist.

How We Became Posthuman is highly recommended to the general reader as a good historical/theoretical book exploring many of the assumptions underlying contemporary conceptions of information, textuality, and subjectivity. It also serves as a wonderful example of the many benefits that come from reading scientific texts and discourses in dialogue with literary texts. One should also keep a look out for Katherine Hayles' next book, tentatively titled *Coding the Signifier: Rethinking Semiosis from the Telegraph to the Computer*, to appear at the University of Chicago Press sometime next year.

Kudos

to Seda Chavdarian for the Distinguished Teaching Award, spring 2001

&

to Alex Prisadsky upon his retirement from the Berkeley Language Center after 19 years of service

NEW BOOKS

New publications of interest to our readers, submitted by Richard Kern, Department of French

Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching, 2nd edition by Jack C. Richards, Theodore S. Rodgers (May 2001)
Cambridge University Press
ISBN: 0521803659

Bilingualism in Development: Language, Literacy, and Cognition by Ellen Bialystok (June 2001)
Cambridge University Press
ISBN: 0521635071

Careers for Foreign Language Aficionados and Other Multilingual Types by H. Ned Seelye, J. Laurence Day (April 2001)
NTC/Contemporary Publishing
ISBN: 0658010670

Creolization of Language and Culture by Robert Chaudenson, Salikoko S. Mufwene, Sheri Pargman (May 2001)
Routledge
ISBN: 0415145937

Cultural Studies and Discourse Analysis: A Dialogue on Language and Identity by Christopher Barker (October 2001)
Sage Publications
ISBN: 0761963847

Curriculum Development in Language Teaching by Jack C. Richards (May 2001)
Cambridge University Press
ISBN: 0521800609

Curriculum Intertext: Place, Language, Pedagogy by Erika Hasebe-Ludt (Editor), Wanda Hurren (Editor) (August 2001)
Peter Lang Publishing
ISBN: 0820455091

English As a Second Language in the Mainstream: Teaching, Learning, and Identity by Bernard A. Mohan, Constant Leung, Christine Davison (Editors) (June 2001)
Longman Publishing Group
ISBN: 0582234840

Evaluation in Text: Authorial Stance and the Construction of Discourse by Susan Hunston, Geoffrey Thompson (Editors) (April 2001)
Oxford University Press
ISBN: 0198299869

Facts About the World's Languages: An Encyclopedia of the World's Major Languages, Past and Present, by Jane Garry, Carl R. Galvez Rubino (Editors) (April 2001)
H.W. Wilson
ISBN: 0824209702

Foreign Accent: The Ontogeny and Phylogeny of Second Language Phonology by Roy Major (Editor) (May 2001)
Lawrence Erlbaum Assoc.
ISBN: 0805838139

Language Acquisition and Learnability by S. Bertolo (Editor) (May 2001)
Cambridge University Press
ISBN: 0521646200

Language and Power, 2nd edition by Norman Fairclough (May 2001)
Longman Publishing Group
ISBN: 0582414830

Language Development: The Essential Readings
by Elizabeth Bates (July 2001)
Blackwell Publishers
ISBN: 0631217444

The Language of Turn and Sequence (Oxford Studies in Sociolinguistics) by Cecilia E. Ford, Barbara A. Fox, Sandra A. Thompson (Editors) (June 2001)
Oxford University Press
ISBN: 0195124898

Language Policies in Education: Critical Issues by James W. Tollefson (Editor) (July 2001)
Lawrence Erlbaum Assoc.
ISBN: 0805836004

Literacy Practices As Social Acts: Power, Status, and Cultural Norms in the Classroom by Cynthia Lewis (June 2001)
Lawrence Erlbaum Assoc.
ISBN: 0805836780

Looking at Language Classrooms by John Laycock (August 2001)
Cambridge University Press
ISBN: 0521588731

Mediated Discourse: The Nexus of Practice by Ronald Scollon (July 2001)
Routledge
ISBN: 0415248833

New Perspectives on Grammar Teaching in Second Language Classrooms by Eli Hinkel, Sandra Fotos (Editors) (July 2001)
Lawrence Erlbaum Assoc.
ISBN: 0805839550

Opening Spaces: Critical Pedagogy and Resistance Theory in Composition by Joe Marshall Hardin (April 2001)
State University of New York Press
ISBN: 0791449041

Popular Literacies by John Trimbur (Editor) (June 2001)
University of Michigan Press
ISBN: 0472086243

Pragmatics in Language Teaching (Cambridge Applied Linguistics Series) by Kenneth R. Rose, Gabriele Kasper (October 2001)
Cambridge University Press
ISBN: 0521008581

Second Language Writers' Text: Linguistic and Rhetorical Features by Eli Hinkel (September 2001)
Lawrence Erlbaum Assoc.
ISBN: 0805838880

Student Writing: Access, Regulation, Desire (Literacies) by Theresa M. Lillis (August 2001)
Routledge
ISBN: 0415228018

Teaching Literature in a Second Language by Brian Parkinson, Helen Reid Thomas, Helen Reid Thomas (April 2001)
Columbia University Press
ISBN: 0748612599

Working with Texts: A Core Introduction to Language Analysis (Intertext) by Ronald Carter (Editor) (August 2001)
Routledge
ISBN: 0415234646

Writing Center Research: Extending the Conversation by Paula Gillespie (Editor) (November 2001)
Lawrence Erlbaum Assoc.
ISBN: 0805834478

Writing Inventions: Identities, Technologies, Pedagogies by Scott Lloyd Dewitt (July 2001)
State University of New York Press
ISBN: 0791450392

ANNOUNCEMENT

ORAL PROFICIENCY INTERVIEW COLLOQUIUM

An introduction to the Oral Proficiency Interview, including demonstrations of sample interviews
in several languages, and a discussion of its merits and implications for the curriculum.

Friday, September 14 and Saturday, September 15, 2001

All sessions are in 370 Dwinelle Hall (unless otherwise noted)

Friday, September 14

1:00-1:15 pm	**Opening Remarks**	**Claire Kramsch** - Berkeley Language Center
1:15-3:00 pm	**Session I**	**Chantal Thompson** - Brigham Young University, Utah *Introduction to the Oral Proficiency Interview*
3:00-3:30 pm	**Coffee break**	
3:30-5:30 pm	**Session II**	**OPI Interviews:** English - **Chantal Thompson** - 371 Dwinelle French - **Jean Schultz** - 33 Dwinelle Italian - **Armando Di Carlo** - 34 Dwinelle Russian - **Ben Rifkin** - B4 Dwinelle Spanish - **Agnes Dimitriou** - 370 Dwinelle

Saturday, September 15

8:30-9:30 am	**Session I**	**Ray Clifford** - Defense Language Institute, Monterey *Proficiency/Performance/Achievement Testing*
9:30-10:00 am	**Coffee break**	
10:00-11:00 am	**Session II**	**Rafael Salaberry** - Rice University, Houston *The Validation Process of the OPI: Ethical and Legal Considerations*
11:00-12:00 pm	**Session III**	**June Phillips** - Weber State University, Utah *OPI and the Foreign Language Standards*
12:00-1:30 pm	**Lunch break**	
1:30-2:30 pm	**Session IV**	**Ben Rifkin** - University of Wisconsin *The ACTFL OPI and Oral Proficiency Guidelines as a Framework for Curricular Planning: The Lesson, The Instructional Unit, The Semester, The Program.*
2:30-3:30 pm	**Session V**	**Leo van Lier** - Monterey Institute of International Studies *The OPI and Conversation: Where Are We Now?*
3:30-4:30 pm	**General Discussion**	
4:30-5:30 pm	**Closing Reception**	

THE BLC LECTURE SERIES IS FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Sponsored by the College of Letters and Science and by Title VI funds provided by the U.S. Department of Education under the National Education Act to the eight National Resource Centers at UC Berkeley.

For information, call (510) 642-0767 ext.10, email space@uclink4.berkeley.edu, or visit http://blc.berkeley.edu

ANNOUNCEMENT

The First UC Conference on Language Learning: Theoretical and Pedagogical Perspectives
University of California, Irvine
March 8-9, 2002

The conference will be followed by a half-day workshop on classroom research methods. Details of the workshop will be announced by early fall 2001.

We invite submissions for presentations from scholars in all disciplines who are involved in all types of research on foreign/second language learning and teaching. In order to focus on issues of concern to scholars and teachers in California, but also to include as broad a range of interests as possible in this our first meeting, we particularly encourage proposals in the following thematic areas: Literature and Culture in Language Study, Language Learning for the Heritage Student, Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL), Second Language Acquisition Theory, and Innovative Classroom Applications of Second Language Acquisition Theory

All papers must represent original, unpublished work. Presentations may be up to 20 minutes long, plus 10 minutes for questions. Please submit either by e-mail (UCCFLL@uci.edu), web form (http://uccllt.ucdavis.edu/Forms/register.cfm), or postal mail an anonymous, clearly titled 250-500-word abstract of your paper/project for review. Postal submissions should include four copies of the abstract.

On a separate sheet or at the bottom of the e-mail submission, please include the following: Name(s) of author(s) and affiliation(s) Title of the paper, Address, phone, and e-mail of primary author
All submissions will be evaluated anonymously. Confirmation of receipt of submissions will be sent by e-mail, or by postal mail if you include a stamped, self-addressed post card. If your paper is accepted, you will be asked to submit a revised abstract for the conference handbook. Notice of acceptance or rejection will be sent to the primary author by mid-December by e-mail.

Pre-registration materials and preliminary schedule will be available in late January 2002.

Send paper submissions to:
UC Conference on Language Learning
Department of German
400 Murray Krieger Hall
University of California, Irvine
Irvine, CA 92697-3150

Send electronic submissions or questions to: *UCCFLL@uci.edu*

DEADLINE
All submissions must be received by November 15, 2001.

All scholars who present papers at the conference may be invited to submit their papers, should the Consortium seek to publish the proceedings of the conference. Those papers would be due summer 2002.

Note to senate and non-senate faculty, and graduate students affiliated with the University of California: There will be funds available for travel and lodging expenses for both participants and attendees. Please send a letter of interest to Glenn Levine at UCCFLL@uci.edu and information will be sent to you as it becomes available.

Sponsored by the UC Consortium for Language Learning and Teaching: http://uccllt.ucdavis.edu/. The UC Consortium for Language Learning and Teaching is a system-wide initiative designed to make the most effective use of UC's vast linguistic resources and expertise. The Consortium fosters collaboration among and across the language programs at the UC campuses with an eye to increasing student access to language study through a combination of the best classroom practices, technological enhancements, and study and work-abroad programs.

Glenn S. Levine
Assistant Professor of German
Language Program Director
Department of German
400 Murray Krieger Hall
University of California, Irvine
Irvine, CA 92697-3150
Tel. 949-824-5785, -6406
Fax. 949-824-6416
E-mail: glevine@uci.edu
www.humanities.uci.edu/german/

2001–2002 CALENDAR

BLC LECTURES

September 14 & 15

OPI INTERVIEW COLLOQUIUM

Ray Clifford

June Phillips

Ben Rifkin

Rafael Salaberry

Chantal Thompson

Leo van Lier

(fri) 1 - 5:30 pm, 370 Dwinelle

(sat) 8:30 - 5:30 pm, 370 Dwinelle

❦

Friday, October 12

LITERACY AND COGNITION

Mark Turner

Professor, University of Maryland,
Department of English
Language and Literature

3 - 5 pm, 370 Dwinelle Hall

Friday, November 2

OTHER-REPAIR IN ORAL PROFICIENCY INTERVIEW: A CONVERSATION-ANALYTIC PERSPECTIVE

Gabriele Kasper

Professor, Department of
Second Language Studies
University of Hawaii at Manoa

3 - 5 pm, 370 Dwinelle Hall

❦

Friday, May 4

INSTRUCTIONAL DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH PROJECTS

BLC Fellows:

Amelia Barili, Lynne Frame, Josephine Kelso, Sarah Roberts, Karina Sliwinski

3 - 5 pm, 370 Dwinelle Hall

Receptions will follow the lectures.

The BLC Lecture Series is sponsored by the College of Letters and Science and by International and Area Studies.

CONFERENCES

November 10, 2001
Foreign Language Association of Northern California (FLANC)
Sacred Heart
Cathedral Preparatory
San Francisco, CA
Contact: Agnes Dimitriou,
agnesd@socrates.berkeley.edu

November 15-18, 2001
The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, ACTFL 2001: A Professional Odyssey–Exploring New Spaces
Washington, DC
http://www.actfl.org

December 27-30, 2001
The 2001 Annual Modern Language Association of America (MLA) Conference
New Orleans, LA
Web: http://www.mla.org

April 6-9, 2002
The American Association for Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese (AATSP)
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

April 9-13, 2002
TESOL 2002: Language and the Human Spirit
Salt Lake City, UT
Web: http://www.tesol.org

THE BERKELEY LANGUAGE CENTER

The Berkeley Language Center (BLC) was established on July 1, 1994. It serves as a resource center for all language teachers on the Berkeley campus.

The mission of the Berkeley Language Center is to improve and strengthen foreign language instruction on the Berkeley campus by keeping teachers informed of new developments in the fields of language pedagogy, second language acquisition, and applied linguistics. The BLC promotes and facilitates the use of new language learning technologies in the classroom.

The BLC is particularly interested in helping lecturers develop new materials, attend conferences and in-service training workshops, and publish their ideas and materials. It has modest funds to help lecturers attend professional meetings and develop new teaching projects.

The Berkeley Language Center also provides audio-video-computerized lesson materials, listening, viewing, recording, duplicating and archiving facilities and related technical and administrative services.

The BLC also administers the Dwinelle Computer Research Facility (DCRF) which supports humanities faculty engages in computer-based research projects and provides equipment and technical expertise for the development of instructional materials

2001-2002
BLC ADVISORY BOARD

Robert J. Blake
Dru Dougherty
Ralph Hexter
Leanne Hinton
Mark Kaiser
Claire Kramsch
David Leonard
Christina Maslach
Mary Ann Mason
Maria Riasanovsky
Jane Stanley
Linda von Hoene
Kenneth Weisinger

2001-2002
BLC EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Agnes Dimitriou
Ina Evans
Lynne Frame
Mark Kaiser
Rick Kern
Claire Kramsch
Steve Poulos
Jean Schultz
Victoria Williams
Boris Wolfson

2001-2002
EDITORIAL BOARD

Mary Akatiff
Rick Kern
Jean Schultz

1-19900-12495-40-X
BERKELEY
LANGUAGE
CENTER
B-40 Dwinelle Hall #2640
University of California, Berkeley
Berkeley, California
94720-2640

Address Correction Requested

Non-Profit Org.
US Postage
PAID
UC Berkeley

FALL 2001
NEWSLETTER