Berkeley Language Center

BLC

Newsletter

Graduation Day

*by Professor Andrew Garrett,
Linguistics*

Professor Garrett delivered this Commencement Address to the graduates of the Languages and Literature Departments at UC Berkeley on May 19.

So, this is it… This is pretty much the moment of truth. There's really no concealing it anymore: "Mom, Dad, you know how I said I was an Electrical Engineering major— Well, actually, it's Scandinavian."

I teach in the Department of Linguistics, which is not among the language and literature programs represented here today. This makes me neutral, so you can trust me when I tell you language study is not simply the fascinating and intricate affair every student here already knows it to be. It's also good for your health and good for the ecology. I'll get to both these points in a little while.

My field, linguistics, is the study of language—not the study of languages to learn to speak them, though that helps, but the study of how they work: what features they all share and how much they can diverge, how people use them and how they evolve, and how their historical and geographical trajectories are related to the historical and geographical trajectories of populations. A lot of my own work is on a native language of northwestern California called Yurok, which I'll get to in a little while, too. This will also give me a chance to talk about the birds and the bees.

Though linguistics is not officially represented here today, we have long-standing and intellectually close relationships with the language and literature programs. Some of these give Berkeley language study a very distinctive flavor—one that contributes significantly to the ecology I alluded to—and I'll say something about that, too.

Proximity is the most obvious of our relationships. The Department of Linguistics and the language and literature programs represented here today share a labyrinthine academic building called Dwinelle Hall. Graduating students surely earn their degree simply by being able to find a classroom or undergraduate advising office in Dwinelle's corridors, but friends, parents, and other family members may need help. Therefore, I will now tell you how to get from the Dwinelle Computer Research Facility (DCRF), where parents might need to retrieve their children finishing honors projects, to my Linguistics office. I'll be as explicit as possible to highlight the close relationships in question.

The DCRF is in room 310, which is on the third floor, building level F. Go out that room, head down the hall, and turn right onto the main corridor. At the end of the corridor you pass through a doorway, and you immediately find yourself on the seventh floor, which is level G. On your left is a stairway; go down, four flights, to the third floor, which is level C. If you make a mistake and go all the way down to level B, the second floor, then to get to Linguistics on the bottom floor you'll have to go up an extra little staircase before you can get down to us. So, be sure to exit the staircase on level C. Level C is the third floor, to repeat, but this is a different third floor from the one where you started, housing room 310, on level F, which is also the sixth floor in another part of the building.

Anyway, having left the staircase at level C, turn to the right. On your right you pass room 3422, which is still on the third floor, and to your left is room 76, which is in the first basement, which is also on level C but two floors higher than Linguistics, which is above ground. So you take a right and you'll confront some more stairs. You're about two thirds of the way there now.

Actually I don't have time to get you all the way to my office now, but if you give me a

call I can come get you. Suffice it to say that you can find my department in the lowest level of Dwinelle Hall. Linguistics occupies the bowels of our shared building like a tapeworm feeding on material partially digested by the language and literature programs above it. Linguists have learned to derive intellectual sustenance from the driest and apparently least nourishing aspects of language. Paradigms, accents, the origin of the preterite, and the uses of the imperfective are the richest of treasures for us.

Despite our physical proximity and our close if occasionally parasitic intellectual relationship, linguistics is administratively separate from the language and literature programs. You are in the Arts and Humanities Division, and we belong to the Division of Social Sciences. The reasons for this difference lurk somewhere in the late medieval period of Berkeley's history, but it has this very practical effect. Because of it I speak to you as a scientist, if only a social one, and you should believe what scientists tell you. So, I'll make my first major point: language study is good for your health. Take it from me, a scientist. I'll explain.

One of the many ways Americans are unusual is that they tend to be monolingual; they speak only one language well. Across the globe over the many thousands of years that languages have been spoken, this condition is an aberration—most people in the world have been bilingual or multilingual, and the vast majority of languages are still spoken by people who also speak other languages well. Bilingualism, according to the recent findings of linguists and psychologists, makes you smarter and healthier.

One study from a few years ago did this test. You're looking at a screen. When you see a blue square, you push a button on the left; when you see a red square, you push a button on the right. Sometimes the colored square is on the same side of the screen as the button you're supposed to push, but sometimes it's on the other side—and that's confusing. How confusing? It turns out older people do this better when they're bilingual than when they're monolingual. The theory is that the effect of knowing two languages and switching between them regularly makes the brain function more flexibly. But I admit that in real life one rarely encounters the red square, blue square situation and maybe you need more convincing.

A second study, this one published earlier this year, examined very elderly people—they were all in their 80s and 90s—and compared the behavior of monolinguals, bilinguals, and multilinguals on a couple of standard cognitive tests. This study found that the more languages you're fluent in, the better you do at tasks like counting to 20, reciting months backwards, and repeating words and phrases after a short delay. This result, too, is taken as an effect of increased cognitive flexibility caused by using more languages. Still, maybe you're thinking we don't need to recite the months backwards.

The most dramatic study in this area came out last year. Its authors examined the medical records of about 200 patients with symptoms of dementia at a Toronto clinic. Half of them were monolingual speakers of English, and half were bilinguals who also spoke another language fluently and regularly. For the bilinguals, on average, the age of onset of symptoms of dementia was just over four years later than the age of onset for the monolinguals, and this effect was independent of other factors like education level, occupation, or gender. There is no drug with such a substantial effect, and the authors comment that a four-year delay in the onset of Alzheimer's disease would reduce its prevalence by almost fifty percent—millions of people would escape it.

So language study makes you smarter, and a lot of it makes you healthier. If we had even the remote prospect of a pill that does for your health what bilingualism does, I'm thinking that project might not be situated in a labyrinth like Dwinelle Hall. If the public health benefits of bilingualism were better known, I'm thinking foreign language teaching might not be as underfunded as it is at Berkeley, where temporary lecturers do so much dedicated work. I'm thinking we might not have language programs that are being cut by 50% this fall, programs where half the lecturers are being dismissed and advanced students will have no classes to take.

A lack of sympathy for multilingualism runs deep in our country, and it's had some interesting consequences. As saddened as I am by our weak commitment to foreign language study, last week I was also proud to be a Californian. The California supreme court decision that gay and straight couples are equally entitled to marry is based on the premise of a basic right to marry. According to the court's opinion, the clearest source

of this right is a right of privacy explicitly added to the state constitution in a 1972 amendment whose history shows that it was meant to encompass the federal constitutional right of privacy, which is held to include the right to marry. Such a federal constitutional right to marry was apparently first mentioned by the U.S. Supreme court in its 1923 decision in Meyer v. Nebraska. In its opinion in the Meyer case the court wrote that the liberty promised by the Declaration of Independence and guaranteed in the U.S. Constitution includes among other privileges "the right of the individual… to engage in any of the common occupations of life, to acquire useful knowledge, [and] to marry, establish a home and bring up children…"

Now the right to marry has had a very public history since the 1923 Meyer decision, but that case actually involved another one of the inalienable rights it articulated—the right "to acquire useful knowledge." In 1919, amid tensions over immigration in the aftermath of the First World War, the State of Nebraska enacted a law providing that "[l]anguages, other than the English language, may be taught as languages only after a pupil shall have attained and successfully passed the eighth grade… " This law was put to the test when Robert Meyer was convicted in 1920 of the crime of teaching German to a 10-year old boy at a parochial school. The state supreme court upheld the statute, writing as follows:

To allow the children of foreigners… to be taught from early childhood the language of the country of their parents was… to educate them so that they must always think in that language, and, as a consequence, naturally inculcate in them the ideas and sentiments foreign to the best interests of this country. The statute… was intended… to require… that, until [children] had grown into [English] and until it had become a part of them, they should not in the schools be taught any other language.

These comically antique words are also eerily modern. In any case, overturning the Nebraska law, and establishing that our inalienable rights include the right to learn foreign languages, the U.S. Supreme Court wrote that "knowledge of the German language cannot reasonably be regarded as harmful. Heretofore it has been commonly looked upon as helpful and desirable." Fluency in a language, the court added, "seldom comes to one not instructed at an early age, and

experience shows that this is not injurious to the health, morals or understanding of the ordinary child."

I think it's pretty clear now in retrospect that this was right, that German adjectival agreement patterns are hard to learn but never destabilized the American way of life. I'd like to suggest as well that bilingualism is not just an inalienable right—even if we mostly don't take advantage of it, or we're not encouraged—and that it's not just good for your health; it's also good for our ecology as humans.

This brings me to the birds and the bees— Graduates, you're old enough to know the truth at last. The bees I have in mind are those you may read about if you have the privilege of majoring in Celtic Studies at Berkeley, one of only two universities in the country to have such a program. When you learn Old Irish here you may get a chance to read *Bechbretha*, the early Irish laws of bee keeping. Written in the seventh century, these are endlessly fascinating. We learn in law 44, for example, that if you have a hive on your property, and your bees swarm and move to your neighbor's property, then the two of you split the honey for three years after which it all goes to your neighbor. If you steal somebody's bees and they sting you, law 27 says you're out of luck, but you get a payment of honey from the owner if his bee stings you while you're walking by, as long as you swear an oath that the bee died from stinging you and not because you swatted it. If a bee sting blinds you, which is pretty difficult according to bee experts, law 30 says you get one whole hive chosen at random.

Bechbretha is interesting for many reasons: for the sheer pleasure of its exuberant strangeness, for its archaic language, and also because the Irish bee laws are part of a broader cultural system regulating the interactions of neighbors with shared pastoral and agricultural interests. The bee laws show that this cultural system was quite active: unlike plants, bees are mobile, of course, but they're not really livestock; yet *Bechbretha* actively imposes a set of agriculturalist and pastoralist interactional patterns on the very different world of social insects.

The birds I have in mind come from a different part of the world, and a language not represented by the programs today. The place is northwestern California, and the language is Yurok, still known by about half a dozen elderly people living where their

ancestors have always lived along the coast and inland on the Klamath River. Yurok is famous among linguists for many features, such as the elaborate elegance of its system of numerals. To count you have to know what kind of things you're counting— there are different forms of numerals for flat things and round things, for things shaped like bushes and things that wind like snakes, for boats and houses and people and animals. If I want to say "four" in Yurok, I say *chrmrwr'ryhl* if it's dogs but *to'onoh* if it's rocks.

This glorious specificity among the numerals contrasts with a surprising gap in names for classes of animals. To begin with, there's no Yurok word for "animal." Every kind of animal or plant has a name, but there aren't many words for generic classes. A black bear is *chir'ry* and a grizzly bear is *nikwech*, but there's no word for "bear." A gray squirrel is *pli'wes* and a ground squirrel is *kwechoye'w*, but there's no "squirrel." Every kind of oak has a name, but there's no term for oaks in general. There's no term that includes just bald eagles and golden eagles, and there's no word for "hawk." According to some Yurok speakers, even the word *ch'uch'ish*—which some people understand as "bird"—refers only to small birds, and there's no cover term including all the various hawks, eagles, owls, and so on. And why would you want those terms? Yurok people can tell the difference between what English treats as kinds of squirrels and oaks, and why would you ever refer to them collectively? If you see one you know which kind it is. The generic terms Yurok has, for fish, salmon, grasses, berries, and other classes, seem to represent the categories that were essential to talk about in the indigenous ecology of northwestern California before the American invasion of the nineteenth century.

To talk about something in Yurok you have to know if it looks flat or round, stick-shaped or snake-like, but you don't have to know if it belongs to the genus *Ursus*. Yet Yurok is just one of the world's six and a half thousand languages, and each is different— every language somehow embodies a distinct take on the world, a different way of classifying experience, a different set of social expectations.

In your programs you've studied languages ranging from Spanish, whose three or four hundred million native speakers rank it below only Mandarin Chinese, to Irish with perhaps twenty or thirty thousand. Yet even

that low figure is high from another perspective: though the ten most widely spoken languages have a total of three billion native speakers, over three thousand languages are spoken by fewer than ten thousand people each, and as many as a thousand are spoken by fewer than 100. Thousands are at risk of dying off in our century; the danger for knowledge and human diversity is incalculable. This looming disaster in human ecology is mainly caused by globalization, of course, especially the spread of English monolingualism but also of other global languages, and we know part of the cure.

The cure includes bilingualism and foreign language learning, and a kind of foreign language learning that incorporates culturally embedded language. It should go without saying that this is essential especially now for us as Americans, but it's also essential for us as people; and this brings me to a third relationship between linguistics and language study at Berkeley. In the 1960s, the Linguistics Department helped establish what was then called the "language lab," a resource for language media of several kinds. Its successor today is the Berkeley Language Center, in the basement on the other side of Dwinelle Hall. If you've taken language classes you've probably been there, in person or on the Web, and you've probably used the language teaching materials they provide. But what is especially distinctive about the Berkeley Language Center, what raises language teaching at Berkeley above the norm, is its emphasis on language learning as learning of culturally embedded knowledge; it helps give our talented and underappreciated language teachers the tools they need to show students how complex and interesting the world actually is, and to guide them to enter it and engage with it.

Multilingualism in the interaction of diverse people has been a central element of the California experience for thousands of years, and it should be no less so today. I hope that you graduating students, who have learned this well, find ways to use what you have learned about the world, and I hope when your children and their children are here in time, they will still be able to appreciate the same complexity of cultures embedded in language.

Notes from the Director

by Richard Kern

Welcome back to another exciting year of events, activities, and fellowship at the BLC!

We left off at the end of last semester with a harrowing budget situation that threatened major cutbacks in course sections in many language departments. Thanks to the efforts of Arts and Humanities Dean Janet Broughton working in close collaboration with language department chairs over the summer, the number of language sections has been almost fully restored to last year's numbers. This is very good news for students and language lecturers alike. Thanks to all who wrote to University and state government officials to express your support for languages at Berkeley. And special congratulations to the students who took the initiative to raise $25,000 in support of instruction in Korean!

Please remember that we face another dire budget year ahead, and this time the University's ability to cope will be far more limited. Consequently it is crucial that your voices of support continue throughout this year. Please write to the Governor, to your State Senator, and to your Assembly Representative to impress upon them the importance of maintaining funding for the study of languages and cultures at the University of California (UC).

Of course, universities cannot and do not address language learning needs in a vacuum, and it is important that we work toward improving the coherence of language study across all levels of education. An important outreach goal for the BLC is to establish a productive dialogue with schools in our region, and I am happy to announce that the BLC has been funded as the new host institution for the East Bay Foreign Language Project, one of eight regional sites of the California Foreign Language Project, whose goals are to strengthen academic content knowledge, develop teacher leadership, provide service and develop partnerships with low-performing schools, support and maintain teacher networks, and support evaluation efforts. In this first year we will focus on developing a leadership team and creating in-service workshops for language teachers in Alameda, Contra Costa, and Solano counties. If you would like to be involved in this project, please let me know.

A big event coming up at the beginning of spring semester is the UC Consortium for Language Learning and Teaching (UC-CLLT) colloquium on "World Language Proficiency in the Californian Context," hosted by the BLC, which will take place in the Pauley Ballroom on February 6 and 7, 2009. This is a sequel to the 2005 UCCLLT national colloquium on the question of establishing a national educational language policy in the U.S. (which you can read about in the summer 2007 issue of the *Modern Language Journal*). The focus this time is on the California context. Three panels will consider: (1) the potential impact of the 2007 Modern Language Association (MLA) report on languages in higher education, which urges a rethinking of university language departments' programs and organizational structures; (2) how the California educational infrastructure is (or is not) providing students with translingual/transcultural competence in foreign languages; and (3) how foreign language competence relates to the fabric of Californian society. Speakers will be invited from different levels of academia (MLA, American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, the University of California, and the California State University system), unified school districts, the California Department of Education, international companies and organizations, the press, and politics. Keynote speakers are Barbara Bodine, former U.S. ambassador to Yemen, and George Breslauer, Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost here at Berkeley. Mark your calendars now for this important colloquium. For more information, go to http://uccllt.ucdavis.edu/events/index.php.

Congratulations to Associate Director Mark Kaiser, who has been awarded a UCCLLT grant to continue work on his foreign language film clip database project. With the assistance of BLC programmer Chris Palmatier, Mark has designed a database structure that allows teachers to search for film clips by language, language forms and vocabulary, cultural notions, and discourse functions (e.g., greetings, leave-taking, apology). The goal for this year is to develop a complete, fully functional database and pedagogical apparatus for one language (Russian) that can then be used to attract major funding for completion of the multi-language film database that is already underway. Mark is collaborating with two UC colleagues, William Nichols at UCSC, who will create a teacher's guide, and Anna

Kudyma at UCLA, who will supervise GSRs and offer feedback on the database and the pedagogical guide. This is a landmark project that will be a major resource for language teaching throughout the UC system. Mark Kaiser kicked off this fall's lecture series with a pedagogical workshop on using film clips in FL teaching on September 12.

Breaking news: the Audio Archive of Linguistic Fieldwork has just been awarded a full five-star rating from Open Language Archives Community—and is the very first archive among all those participating to get this top rating. The Audio Archive includes linguistic data, stories, songs/chants, and other material in about 90 languages, mostly endangered or rare languages, collected in fieldwork sponsored by the Berkeley Linguistics Department's Survey of California and Other Indian Languages. Kudos to Susan Stone of IST-Data Services and to Marianne Garner of the BLC for their outstanding work on the design and implementation of the archive.

Welcome to our new Academic and Outreach Coordinator, Sirpa Tuomainen! Sirpa is a Lecturer in Scandinavian Languages (and an ESL specialist) with lots of practical experience with distance education, who has just returned from a year at Jyväskylä University in Finland where she developed student proficiency standards for Finnish. Sirpa's BLC duties include organizing regular events for language lecturers, working with the BLC Fellows in the development of their language research projects, organizing language coordinators to discuss issues of common concern and interest, meeting with invited scholars and guests, writing articles in the BLC Newsletter, and serving as a general goodwill ambassador for the BLC.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend our heartfelt thanks to Lisa Little, the outgoing Coordinator, for her three years of outstanding leadership. Lisa initiated a host of new and very successful outreach events, such as the noon reading group, which brings lecturers together for lunch to discuss readings of current relevance; the BLC technology series, which showcases the many innovative ways that language teachers at Berkeley are using technology in their classes; pedagogy show-and-tell events, which give instructors a chance to share techniques that have worked well in their classes; and the pedagogy workshop series, begun last spring, which focuses on practical ways of enhancing classroom teaching.

Last spring Lisa also organized a special forum to discuss the MLA Ad Hoc Committee on Foreign Languages Report with Claire Kramsch, one of the report's authors. This event was well attended by language instructors, department chairs, and scholars from other institutions, including several universities in Europe, and generated spirited discussion. Thanks to your good cheer and the events, meals, discussion groups, forums, and workshops you organized, Lisa, you have invigorated the language teaching community at Berkeley. Spasibo!

Notes from the Associate Director

by Mark Kaiser

For the past year the BLC has been actively engaged in the development of the BLC's Library of Foreign Language Film Clips. The project, which received generous funding from the UC Consortium for Language Learning and Teaching (UCCLLT), is based on these principles: 1) film contains a wealth of linguistic and cultural information which can be harnessed for language study; 2) finding, preparing, and delivering clips can be both technically challenging and time consuming for individual instructors; 3) a community of instructors sharing their linguistic, cultural, and pedagogical expertise will maximize the pedagogical benefit to our students.

In the fall of 2007, we began constructing the database, acquiring the hardware to store and serve large amounts of data, researching copyright law and fair use provisions, and by mid-spring we had competed work on a clip production database and Web interface, allowing the creation and tagging of clips. This past summer, using UCCLLT, BLC, and private funding, we hired graduate students with expertise in Russian, French, Spanish, Japanese, Turkish, and, most recently, Arabic. As of this writing we have created 476 tagged clips in Russian, 689 in French, 174 in Spanish, and 149 in Japanese. An additional 1857 clips in these four languages are waiting a final check before being published, and 965 clips (in Arabic, Chinese, Italian, Turkish) are cut and still need to be tagged and verified. The process is neither simple nor quick: two minutes of original film typically will require 45–75 minutes to cut and tag.

The greatest challenge has been descriptive tagging, i.e., markers pointing to the cultural, discourse, and linguistic features of the clip. Our dilemma might be best conveyed through the following example: Suppose we have a scene where a parent is trying to get a son to not drop out of school. Tagger A might choose to tag this clip for teenager, parent, school, persuade, threat, dropout. Tagger B, working on a different film with a similar scene, might tag it with student, family, institution, warning, quit. And a user, depending on what they are looking for, might search on 'youth' or 'truancy' or 'convince,' and not find either clip. The situation would appear to call for a controlled vocabulary, thereby limiting what can be tagged. However, given the range of topics and situations in film, the cultural and linguistic specifics of each language, we determined that it would be impossible to create the controlled vocabulary prior to tagging.

Similarly, taggers also recorded the language of the clips' dialogs, not as subtitles, but in dictionary form. Should we tag every word in the clips, or settle for a few that struck the tagger as important or unusual? Do we tag the spoken form or a dictionary form? And again, how should we strive for a degree of uniformity across taggers?

Our imperfect solution was to create a wiki and have ongoing discussions about what to add, how to modify our controlled vocabulary, and establish how to tag the language in the dialogs. Our solutions were not always perfect, and later modifications would impact clips that already had been tagged, but through the wiki discussion we were able to reach some consensus. The wiki may be viewed at http://dcrf-dev.berkeley.edu/blcwiki-dev/index.php/Film_Clip_Project and I would encourage you to look at both the articles and our discussions to get a better idea of the process we went through.

On Friday, September 12, we unveiled the BLC Library of Foreign Language Film Clips (LFLFC). If you were unable to join us on the 12th, please visit the LFLFC at http://blcvideoclips.berkeley.edu, register, and enjoy using the clips in your language. And if there are no clips currently available in your language, let me know of your interest and we will do our best to get something up there soon.

Finally, I would like to thank the many people who have contributed to the project: our taggers; John Wuorenmaa, for his work on system design and networking; Charles Derden, media editing; Marianne Garner, managing film data; Melanie Rollins, film purchases; Ana Arteaga, fiscal management and payroll; and Chris Palmatier, our Web designer, database designer, and programmer, who has given long days and nights and weekends, and I suspect a bit of his soul, to make this project successful.

France–Berkeley Exchange: A Follow-up Report

by Désirée Pries, Lecturer and Coordinator of Second Year, French

Nicolas Guichon's article "A French Perspective on American Academic Culture" in last spring's issue of the BLC Newsletter focused on "Rethinking Language Teaching in the Digital Age," a project funded by the France-Berkeley Fund. One of the things that struck Guichon during his visit to Berkeley was the degree to which graduate students and even undergraduate students have a voice in research projects. As one of the faculty members involved in this project, I thought I would elaborate on the roles that graduate and undergraduate students have played in this project, both here and in France.

But first, an overview of the project. With an overarching goal of exploring the processes and implications of computer-mediated communication for language teaching, the project seeks to understand how students interact with and learn from French online tutors in desktop videoconferencing environments. Once a week, intermediate-level French students at UC Berkeley meet online with tutors in Lyon to speak French, putting into use the vocabulary, grammar, culture, and concepts they have learned in class. The tutors are MA students in teaching French as a foreign language at the Université Lumière Lyon 2. Students' evaluations, interviews, and informal conversations all attest to the value they see in participating in a one-on-one (or two-by-two) "authentic" exchange with their Lyon tutors.

While Berkeley French 3 students nervously and excitedly participate in "live" conversation through webcam and chat online, a team of researchers both in Lyon and in Berkeley observe and collect material to evaluate this multimodal language-classroom experience. In addition to the faculty members involved in this project—Christine Develotte (INRP–National Institute of Educational Research and École Normale Supérieure–Lettres et Sciences Humaines, Lyon), Nicolas Guichon (University of Lyon 2), Rick Kern (Berkeley), and Désirée Pries (Berkeley)—a team of student researchers participate in this exchange.

Berkeley undergraduates in the Undergraduate Research Apprentice Program (Jeremiah Leung, Jimmy Phavasiri, Wendy Shue) work closely with French Professor Rick Kern, deepening their knowledge and skills through this collaborative pedagogy project, "while experiencing what it means to be part of an intellectual community engaged in research" (http://research.berkeley.edu/urap). These students assist by taking notes during the online classroom interactions, sharing their observations, and helping with initial data analysis in regular meetings with Kern. They also provide technical and classroom support (including filming interactions and facilitating the online exchange).

David Malinowski, PhD candidate in the Graduate School of Education, joined the team in 2007-08. Although he already spoke several languages when he joined the research team, he began to add French to his repertoire after becoming involved in the project. He plays an important role in the collection and analysis of data, and in March 2008 he traveled to Lyon for the final interaction between students and tutors in the spring 2008 session. He returned to Lyon this summer to participate in the creation of a new technological platform, VisU. He describes his research as follows: "At the more local level, my dissertation project aims to explore if and how the introduction of Internet communications technology to a face-to-face classroom for foreign language instruction transforms institutional roles played by the participants (student, teacher, tutor) and challenges notions of 'authentic' target language and culture. In a broader context, I hope such an inquiry contributes to an understanding of how distance education and the increasing use of communications technology to mediate learning are redefining institutional relations of power and educational possibility."

A team of graduate researchers at École Normale Supérieure–Lettres et Sciences Humaines, Lyon is also essential to this project: Samira Drissi, Caroline Vincent and Viorica Nicolaev in 2007-08, Samira Drissi and Vassilis Valmas in 2006-07. They are involved not only in data collection and analysis, but also in facilitating the online Berkeley-Lyon exchange by providing logistical and other support. Caroline Vincent, who, along with Viorica Nicolaev, was responsible for the collection of the 2007-08 corpus and treatment of videos, describes her research project as the study of "the socio-affective relationships that are established in the interactions." She notes that she would like "to observe and analyze how the students and tutors represent themselves and how they will categorize each other" in the chat environment. Viorica Nicolaev is doing a quantitative comparative analysis of the synchronous and asynchronous oral and chat interactions to study the acquisition of French through distance learning.

It is with pleasure that I have opened my French 3 classes to this exciting project and continue to participate in the research and analysis of this rich corpus of data as a part of a team that unites professors, lecturers, graduate and undergraduate students, and researchers from Berkeley and France.

Did You Know That…

by Mark Kaiser,
Associate Director, BLC

The primary focus of linguists in the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth was the history of languages and the reconstruction of proto-languages, Proto-Indo-European (PIE) being the best known example? Linguists also posited the existence of other language families, including Uralic (Finnish, Hungarian, Estonian, Samoyedic, Sami), Afro-Asiatic (Semitic, Cushitic, Berber, Chadic, Egyptian), Altaic (Turkic, Mongolic, Tungusic, Korean, Japonic, and possibly Ainu), Dravidian (Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam), Sino-Tibetan (Chinese, Tibetan, Burmese, Himalayan). Only the most common languages or language families are listed here, and it should be noted that some classifications are not without controversy.

One can well imagine then that the idea, first put forward by the Danish linguist Holger Pederson in 1903 (and quickly forgotten), that these language families themselves might be related, would be met with more than just skepticism. Nevertheless, two Russian linguists, V. Illich-Svytich and A. Dolgopolsky, began publishing papers in the 1960s and eventually a multi-volume dictionary of Proto-Nostratic, the reconstruction of the language which eventually gave rise to Indo-European, Kartvelian, Afro-Asiatic, Dravidian, Uralic, and Altaic, with the later additions of Eskimo-Aleut.

The Russian linguists' work was based on the comparative method, i.e., the notion that semantically related forms exhibit regular sound correspondences. So, as an example in Indo-European, although English "queen" and Russian zhena don't sound particularly alike, the word-initial sounds can be traced back to a Proto-Germanic *kʷen- and a Proto-Slavic *zhena, which in turn derive from PIE *gʷen-, with the mutation of PIE *gʷ- to *kʷ- in Germanic and the correspondence to *zh- in Slavic being widely documented. Taking this back further, the Russians compared PIE *gʷen- to Proto-Afro-Asiatic *k(w)n/*knw "woman, wife" and to Proto-Altaic *küni "wife" in their reconstruction of Nostratic **küni "woman, wife".

A second foundation of their work was the rejection of forms in their reconstructions that might be explained by borrowings.

In a paper published prior to his work on reconstruction, Illich-Svitych commented on a number of borrowings from Semitic into Indo-European, many of the words coming from terms in agriculture, such as the words for grape/wine and millstone. In an article in *Вопросы языкознания* (1964, n.2), Dolgopolsky examined borrowings in historical periods and came to the conclusion that certain words in languages are highly resistant to borrowing, for example, the first and second pronoun, the words for "two", "eye/see", "star", "ear/hear", to name just a few.

Since Illich-Svitych's and Dolgopolsky's initial works, a small group of linguists in Moscow has continued their work, modifying the notion of Nostratic and Afro-Asiatic's place in it, while also working on the reconstruction of other macro-families. For example, S. Starostin and S. Nikolayev have worked on the reconstruction of Dene-Caucasian, positing a genetic relationship between the Na-Dene languages of North America (Athabaskan, Eyak, and a few others) with the Yeniseian languages of Siberia (widely accepted), but also with North Caucasian languages, Sino-Tibetan, and Basque, the latter usually identified as a language isolate. As might be expected, this wider grouping is rather more controversial.

Any piece, no matter how short, on distant linguistic comparison would be remiss if it failed to include the work of J. Greenberg. His work on the reconstruction of Amerind (Native American languages not included in Eskimo-Aleut or Na-Dene) and his parallel work on Eurasiatic (close in its composition to Illich-Svitych's Nostratic), also sought to prove the prehistoric existence of large macro-families of languages; however, his methodology of mass comparison, which looks at broad similarities between language families, falls short of the Russian school's strict adherence to a regular correspondence of sounds, the essence of the comparative method.

Learning to Learn: Neurobiology and Cognitive Science as Bases of Autonomous Learning

by Amelia Barili, Lecturer, Spanish and Portuguese

Universities throughout the world are beginning to implement a shift from teaching-centered approaches to learning-centered ones that foster greater commitment on the part of the students and develop capacities of autonomous learning and life-long learning.

The need for autonomous learning comes from the fact that we are preparing students for a world of rapid change, and for a future filled with uncertainties. Students in this new millennium need to be able to think for themselves, and be self-initiating, self-modifying and self-directing. They will need skills that cannot be gained by learning content alone. A changing world demands changes in our instructional and curriculum practices, and highlights the need to think in social contexts.

The research I did as a BLC Fellow helps to show how these "new pedagogies" are supported by the recent findings of neurobiology and cognitive science that are making us re-think thinking and learning. The findings—which present new perspectives on how the brain works—emphasize the continuous dialogue between the brain and the heart, the importance of inner motivation, and of paying attention to intention for deep sustained learning. In this article I highlight relationships between these research findings and the principles of autonomous learning, as well as possible applications to intercultural studies and to the learning of a second language.

When I began my research I was looking for methodologies to empower students to learn in ways that would remain with them after they graduated. I had already implemented in my courses such pedagogies as service learning, collaborative learning, teaching from multiple perspectives and, this semester, I was looking for a way to teach Creative Thinking.

Reflecting on the classic works on creativity by May, Gardner, Csikeszentmihalyi, and others, I realized that to "teach creativity" was an oxymoron, and so I rephrased my research question to be: "What are the conditions that best foster creativity?" Inspired by Rollo May's definition that "creativity is not the superficial level of objectified intellectualization, but is an encounter with the world on a level that undercuts the subject-object split" and by the agreement among these authors that the two main characteristics of creativity are:

- Inner Motivation—which leads to great commitment and absorption in the task, and
- Inter-Intra Intelligence—which Gardner defines as the journey from the world to the self and back again,

I set out to find pedagogies that would nourish these characteristics.

This new orientation led me to a wealth of literature on student-centered approaches such as integrative learning, experiential learning, embodied learning, Socratic learning, team-based learning and mindful learning, among others. (See bibliography for websites that were particularly useful in this search.)

What these "new pedagogies" have in common is a switch of emphasis, from teaching to learning, from content-based instruction to student-centered learning processes. In other words, the emphasis is on helping students learn how to learn. Concomitantly, these pedagogies bring a change in the traditional classroom dynamics:

- The teacher is no longer the expert figure that imparts knowledge to students who passively take notes that they quickly forget after the exam. No longer the "sage on stage," the teacher becomes a mentor who models the tasks and engages in open dialogue with the students.
- The students take greater initiative for their own process of learning; they work in teams, learning with and from peers in progressively challenging tasks; they find opportunities to learn and apply the subject in other environments and contexts: in the local community, through service learning, etc.

- The content of the course does not come only from books, nor is strictly determined by the interests of the professor, but is open and flexible, accommodating students to do research according to their individual circumstances and encouraging them to express their voices.
- The goals of the course and the tools of assessment, such as rubrics, are discussed and developed at the beginning of the semester by teacher and students, providing an opportunity to reflect together on the process of learning.
- The emphasis is taken away from the letter grade to the real process of learning.
- As faculty we have often seen ourselves as teaching disciplinary content. Harvard psychologist, Ellen Langer, invites us to be more involved in assisting students on learning to learn or what she calls "Mindful Learning."

She recommends:

- Teaching conditionally: Make it clear that all knowledge has been constructed. There are no basic facts—they depend on the context, and the context is temporary since we are always adding to it or modifying it.
- Teaching relationally: Enable the student to take the new information, link it to prior knowledge, and then use it in some new way. Students can explain the new information in different terms, manipulate it to achieve different ends, and apply it to distinct, novel situations.

At the other end of the spectrum is rote memorization, what Langer identifies as "a strategy to take in material that has no personal meaning." We want to move from this impersonal and superficial way of learning to deep, sustained learning, a state where students learn to own the material.

Almost as impersonal as rote memorization is the "Follow the Instructions Procedure." Langer's argument is that if we encourage or simply present a step-by-step method of problem solving, we are fostering memorization, or "an essentially mindless type of success." It is better for the brain to figure out the meaning of the information in different contexts and to discover how to read the information in novel ways.

Langer has done many experiments that show the success of this method in various disciplines. In our field, she did an experiment where she had three groups read short stories. The first group just read, the second read looking for specific details, and the third was told to read the stories from different perspectives and/or imagine different endings. The results showed that the third group enjoyed the process much more and remembered significantly more details about the stories. This is one of many possible ways of putting into practice Langer's advice to "study like a detective always connecting new knowledge to previous knowledge."

Her advice strongly resonated in me at this point of my research. I was delighted to discover the connections between Langer's work and that of UCLA neuroscientist Daniel Siegel, whose work I had studied in the context of his collaboration with the Dalai Lama concerning the research scientists and advanced meditators are doing at the Mind Life Institute. Suddenly my research of techniques to teach creative thinking to my students at Berkeley touched a central nerve of my life outside academia: my conversations and work with my dear friend, physicist and systems analyst, Fritjof Capra, about the convergences of East and West (and arts and science), and my interest in cognitive science, embodied learning, contemplative practices, and neurobiology.

It was at that point, when Rick Kern suggested that I demonstrate how neurobiology and cognitive science support "new pedagogies," that I went from learning about autonomous learners to actually experiencing once again becoming one. When I realized how my two lives were converging, I couldn't stop reading, thinking and reflecting on what I was discovering. I wanted to see from different perspectives how all these pieces of the puzzle fit together and to find ways to express that which is deeply meaningful and relevant to me. The result of this combined research is a rich framework of which, perforce, I can only give highlights within the limits of this report

Some of the principles from cognitive science (according to Maturana, Varela, Damasio, Lakoff and especially Capra) that

I find most relevant to re-thinking the process of learning are the following:

1. The mind/body split is artificial. Descartes was wrong. Body and mind are not two separate things. Mind is not a thing but an embodied process. Mind is the process of cognition involved in the process of life.

2. Life and cognition are inseparably connected. Cognition involves the entire process of life—including perception, emotion and behavior. The interactions of a living organism with its environment are cognitive interactions.

3. Cognition is not the representation of an independently existing world, but rather a continual bringing forth of a world through the process of living. "To live is to know."

4. Communication is not a transmission of information, but a coordination of behavior between living organisms. Learning is a self-reflecting experience. Both the teacher and the student are cognitive organisms in process.

These cognitive principles, combined, give us the cognitive basis for the shift of paradigms from teaching to learning. They explain why a deep cognitive process requires teachers to shift from a role as an authority figure who imparts the knowledge about a fixed world out there, to one who models and assists in creating environments for learning.

Those findings of cognitive science coincide with these latest findings of neurobiology which are also leading us to re-think thinking and learning.

1. Neuroplasticity: Experience changes the function of the brain itself. The connections among the 100 billion neurons in the brain are continually carving out new pathways that can support ongoing learning and can enrich our mental health well into our nineties. How we think/feel affects our brain and our capacity for further thinking/feeling. It is clearly important to actively shape the nature of our experiences in ways that keep the mind or cognitive process thriving and foster habits of life-long learning.

2. Reflective Coherence: Neuroplasticity requires internal attunement. In practice this means attuning our attention to

our intention. Optimal learning happens when the brain and the heart are attuned. This is not just an alignment of desire and reason. There is an embodied process, an actual physical resonance between heart and brain that recent neurobiological findings have demonstrated and which is partly facilitated by the fact that the heart has neurons and glia (neurotransmitters) like the brain has. These dynamic interactions between brain and heart, feeding into one another in resonant patterning, shape our perceptions and our capacity to understand and learn. The inherent learning that happens when the heart is involved, as shown by these neurobiological findings, was apparently known to ancient cultures such as the Chinese, whose ideograms for thinking, studying, learning, and recalling all include the radical for "heart." [See the accompanying piece on the "heart" radical.]

3. Awareness of Self and Other. The internal attunement that fosters neuroplasticity is mediated by the social resonance circuits of the brain, including the mirror-neuron system and related areas of the pre-frontal cortex that map the self as observed and observing self. In other words, learners learn best when heart and brain are not at odds but resonating together, and when they can meaningfully connect their intra- and interpersonal selves. Learning is indeed an embodied and social experience. When we consider the power of reflective coherence to alter not only the power of our brain function, but our deep sense of self and our perceptions of the world around us, we realize the need to take this dimension into account in our pedagogies.

In his book *Neurobiology of Affect in Language*, linguist John H. Schumann refers to this heart-brain dialogue as affect—the movement towards or away from learning a language according to the inner motivation of the student. His research shows that students' life experiences and needs determine their inner motivation. Based on the fact that the neural circuitry that gets stimulated in animals looking for the right patch to graze on is the same circuitry that gets stimulated in humans when learning a second language, he calls this motivation for

learning "mental foraging." Claire Kramsch calls it "desire." Based on neurobiological findings about the function of these neural circuitries, Schumann makes a thought provoking side remark when he compares students with cows and sheep, and teachers with herders who provide what the students graze on. He remarks that in fulfilling this function we, as teachers, can either satisfy their desire for the particular nourishment they intuitively know they need or, when that desire is not met, move them to change pastures or to give up their natural sense of what is nourishing and what is not.

What these findings show us is that if we focus on attuning our own minds and those of our students, we will be harnessing perceptual skills, and strengthening neural circuits that will enable more robust intra- and inter-attunements for the classroom and beyond.

These connections between new pedagogies and the findings of cognitive science and neurobiology provide the scientific basis for a paradigm shift in education. This new paradigm, in keeping with the demands of a rapidly changing world, emphasizes autonomous learning. Active reflection on our perceptions of self and other, as well as fostering inner motivation are key elements in the change from a teaching-centered system to a learning-centered one that is spreading throughout the world at the university level. In Europe, for example, the Sorbonne and Bologna Declarations established a mandate to create a Higher Education Quality system based on intercultural competence and autonomous learning. In our field, globalization is closely linked to the phenomena of multiculturalism, multilingualism, and transnationalism. Assisting our students in developing greater awareness of self and other, and on reflecting about their learning processes is necessary to promote not only their professional mobility but also more effective social interaction and greater social cohesion in our fast-changing world.

For the purpose of reflection on these issues I leave the reader with some guiding questions…

- How can we develop habits of life-long learning?

- What skills and knowledge will stand the test of time, given the dynamic nature of knowledge and information?
- What would change in our approach to teaching if we become aware of scientific findings that show that how a person reflects internally will shape that person's capacity for deep sustained learning and will deeply affect also how she/he treats both herself/himself and others?
- How can we foster autonomous learning in our culture and language courses?

Suggested Readings

On Creativity and Creative Thinking

The Courage to Create. Rollo May. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1975.

Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences. Howard Gardner. New York: Basic Books, 1983.

Creating Minds. An Anatomy of Creativity Seeing Through the Lives of Freud, Einstein, Picasso, Stravinsky, Eliot, Graham, and Gandhi. Howard Gardner. New York: Basic Books, 1993.

Creativity. Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi. New York: Harper Collins, 1996.

On Learning-Centered Teaching

Learner-Centered Teaching: Five Key Changes to Practice. Maryellen Weimar. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002.

Creating Significant Learning Experiences. An Integrated Approach to Designing College Courses. L. Dee Fink. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003.

Team-Based Learning: A Transformative Use of Small Groups for Large and Small Classes. Larry K. Michaelsen, Arletta Bauman Knight, and L. Dee Fink. Westport, CT: Praeger Press, 2002.

Introduction to Rubrics. Danielle D. Stevens and Antonia J. Levi. Sterling, VA: Stylus, 2005.

On Multiculturalism, Intercultural Studies, and Ecology of Languages

Pedagogy of the Oppressed. Paulo Freire. New York: The Continuum, 1970.

Borderlands/La Frontera. Gloria Anzaldúa. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987.

Language Acquisition and Language Socialization. Ecological Perspectives. Claire Kramsch (ed.). London-New York: Continuum, 2002.

Critical Citizens for an Intercultural World: Foreign Language Education as Cultural Politics. Manuela Guilherme. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 2002.

Intercultural Competence for Professional Mobility. Evelyne Glaser, Manuela Guilherme, María del Carmen Méndez García, and Terry Mughan. Graz: Council of Europe, 2007.

On Mindfulness in Teaching and Learning, Re-thinking Thinking and Intelligence

Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences. Howard Gardner. New York: Basic Books, 1983.

The Power of Mindful Learning. Ellen J. Langer. Cambridge, MA: Perseus Publishing, 1997.

The Feeling of What Happens. Antonio Damasio. New York-London: Harcourt Inc., 1999.

The Developing Mind. Daniel J. Siegel. New York-London: The Guilford Press. 1999.

On Neurobiology and Language Learning

The Neurobiology of Affect in Language. John H. Schumann. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1997.

The Mindful Brain. Daniel J. Siegel. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2007.

On Cognitive Science

Philosophy in the Flesh. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson. New York: Basic Books, 1999.

Gentle Bridges. Conversations with the Dalai Lama on the Sciences of Mind. Jeremy W. Hayward and Francisco Varela. Boston-London: Shambala, 2001.

Mind and Consciousness in Hidden Connections. Fritjof Capra. New York-London: Doubleday, 2002.

Useful websites:

http://www.podnetwork.org/search.htm#faculty

http://ctl.stanford.edu/Tomprof/postings.html

TeacherTube.com (see Did You Know? 2.0)

http://rubistar.4teachers.org/index.php

The "Heart" Character

by Liu Li, Lecturer in Chinese, East Asian Languages and Cultures

心 is the "heart" character. It is also a radical of many Chinese characters. It is written just like this (心) when a character has top-bottom structure; however it is written differently, like this, 忄, when a character has left-right structure.

想 think; suppose; reckon; consider; want to; would like to; feel like (doing something); remember with longing; miss.

思 think; consider, think of; long for.

念 think of; miss; read aloud; study; attend school.

思想 thought; thinking; idea; ideology.

想念 remember with longing; long to see again; miss.

慧 intelligent; bright.

愛 love; affection; like; be fond of; be keen on; cherish; treasure; hold dear; take good care of; be apt to; be in the habit of.

慮 consider; ponder; think over; concern; anxiety; worry.

恕 forgive; pardon; excuse; <polite> excuse me; beg your pardon; forbearance (as advocated by Confucius).

聽 listen; hear; heed; obey.

憶 recall; recollects.

悔 regret; repent.

懺 repent.

怕 fear; dread; be afraid of; I'm afraid; I suppose; perhaps.

恨 hate; regret.

憐 pity; sympathize with.

憫 commiserate; pity; <formal> sorrow.

懼 fear; dread.

悅 happy; pleased; delighted; please; delight.

惱 angry; irritated; annoyed; unhappy; worried.

慕 admire; yearn for.

Phrases with 心

心神 mind; state of mind.

心無二用 one cannot keep one's mind on two things at the same time; one should concentrate on one's work.

心願 cherished desire; aspiration; wish; dream.

心意 regard; kindly feelings; intention; purpose.

意志 will.

心機 thinking; scheming.

心計 calculation; scheming; planning.

心不在焉 absent-minded; inattentive; preoccupied (with something else).

用心 diligently; attentively; with concentrated attention; motive; intention.

專心 concentrate one's attention; be absorbed.

專心學習 concentrate one's attention to study / learn /emulate.

Innovating Tradition: Folklore, Literature, and Translingual and Transcultural Competence

by Jennifer Gipson, PhD candidate, French

How could something so dusty and dated sounding as "folklore" go hand in hand with the goals of the 2007 MLA report on foreign languages and higher education subtitled "New Structure for a Changed World?" When folklore is thought of not as old and exotic but as a persistent means of unofficial and unsigned cultural expression that circulates by "click of mouse" as well as "word of mouth," it becomes relevant, dynamic, and readily accessible to students. Folklore is found in toasts, tongue twisters, counting-out rhymes, graffiti, online urban legends, or slipped into conversation as proverbs, traditional put-downs, or figures of speech. It informs literature, music, and advertising. It includes stereotypes, pervasive metaphors, the national imagination, and sites of collective memory—all elements explicitly cited in the MLA report in one model of what students should be able to draw on to interpret a cultural narrative (2007: 238-239). Folklore underlies the vast fonds commun of stories that cultures tell and that literacy-based approaches to language learning point to as essential to communication (Kern 2000).

In spite of these resonances, the scholarship that explicitly addresses folklore and the foreign language classroom is limited in scope or pertinence. Magwire (2005) provides an excellent overview of scholarship on proverbs in the foreign language classroom and offers some practical ideas about this particular genre of folklore. McArthur and Carr (1975) discuss folk narrative primarily in terms of "instant vocabulary" afforded by familiarity with plot. Yet, behind a veil of simplicity or familiarity that can be inviting to language students or instantly increase their vocabulary, folklore conceals vast variation, profound meaning, and ingenious manipulation of language that give it tremendous pedagogical potential. In the course of my BLC fellowship, I have explored this potential in light of the MLA report's emphasis on "translingual and transcultural competency" and call for the broadening of foreign language curricula. I have implemented my findings in the course design for a special summer 2008 section of French 4 I will describe below. Sample lessons, geared towards instructors and students with no theoretical background in folklore, are available in English on my BLC project website (http://dcrf-dev3.berkeley.edu/jennifer/).

Why Folklore: One Perspective on the MLA Report's Goals

The MLA report presents the goal of "translingual and transcultural competence" as follows:

> Advanced language training often seeks to replicate the competence of an educated native speaker, a goal that post adolescent learners rarely reach. The idea of translingual and transcultural competence, in contrast, places value on the ability to operate between languages. Students are educated to function as informed and capable interlocutors with educated native speakers in the target language. They are also trained to reflect on the world and themselves through the lens of another language and culture. They learn to comprehend speakers of the target language as members of foreign societies and to grasp themselves as Americans—that is, as members of a society that is foreign to others. (237)

Folklore's resonances with these goals are numerous. Among the possible answers to the question "what does folklore offer?" are the following:

1. Insight into another culture and into that culture's view of outsiders: Folklore is often an outlet for expressing stereotypes or profound social concerns. Online "fieldwork" allows students to find material in the target language and see how their own culture is portrayed in jokes or urban legends on familiar electronic terrain.

2. A prompt for comparative thinking: To the extent that folklore simultaneously carries familiar elements or structures but varies greatly from culture to culture and from version to version, it naturally fosters self-reflexive awareness on which "translingual and transcultural competence" are predicated. It reminds us that we are not alone and that our stories and sayings are not set in stone. The myriad ways that folklore (in the form of rebuses, tongue twisters, word plays, or riddles) plays with language makes students more aware of the complexities and potentially "loaded" nature of language. Folklore spotlights the fact that individual words have stories and associations—all inaccessible to Google Translator or inattentive readers.

3. A heightened awareness of interpretative and signifying processes: Studying the intertexts of folklore in advertising, music, and literature allows students to experiment with their own cultural codes and become aware of how common narratives influence interpretative processes.

Course Design: French 4 (Special Section, Summer 2008)

This part of my project uses folklore, its online iterations, and its adaptations in literature, music, and advertising as the basis for a special multimedia French 4 section for summer 2008 (introduction to literature and advanced grammar). This course seeks to foster broadly transferable analytical frameworks that enhance literary analysis and further students' understandings of other forms of cultural expression and their interrelations. The lessons listed in the sidebar of my course website (http://dcrf-dev3.berkeley.edu/jennifer/?page_id=28) as discrete units could be used in isolation in other courses (examples 1 and 2). However, they follow one another for the purposes of this class. For example, La Fontaine, his talking animals, and affronts to power seen in fables and a recent film leads to discussion of potentially subversive elements of francophone animal tales. Folktales and their adaptations in advertising and film lead to a unit on literary incarnations of tales and stories in the form of contes and nouvelles. As in other French 4 courses, students will be introduced to major literary genres like theater or poetry with grammar review integrated throughout.

Very often in the classroom, folklore and other non-literary forms of cultural expres-

sion serve as a stepping-stone for broader literary reflections. However, I contend that "translingual and transcultural competence" require students to conceive of cultural production more as a multi-dimensional web than a one-way street leading to literature and sign-posted with the sometimes-fragile categories we impose. Therefore, some of my units use literature as a starting point. For example, one lesson begins with a few short texts by the Moroccan writer Tahar Ben Jelloun that are based on urban legends. By approaching these texts first in literary terms, students can see how their perception changes when they discover familiar plots like the famous "vanishing hitchhiker" legend, raising questions about relationships between art and originality or folklore and literature. But Ben Jelloun's literary use of urban legends in, for example, a volume of short stories that discuss gender relations in the Arabic world, also brings into focus the profound social concerns to which this pervasive genre of folklore responds in extra-literary contexts. In keeping with the MLA report's emphasis on conceiving of one's own culture as "foreign" to others, I might ask students to use the Internet to find the latest French-language urban legends that advance certain stereotypes of Americans. (See http://dcrf-dev3.berkeley.edu/jennifer/?page_id=50 and http://dcrf-dev3.berkeley.edu/jennifer/?page_id=51 for lessons in French.)

Ironically, folklore, that is often relegated to a distant past or exotic locale in language textbooks, can actually help the foreign language curriculum keep pace with the changed—and ever-changing—world to which the MLA report points. Old stories, sayings, and jokes get recycled for new realities. It's not by chance that I've juxtaposed RSS feeds from a French urban legend site with up-to-the-minute news from the French newspaper *Le Monde* in the side bar of my course website (example 3). Online folklore gives students a barometer not of official and factual news but of how cultures deal with these current events or express persistent preoccupations through unofficial and collective cultural production. "Virtual folklore fieldwork" in any language lets students find on their own the texts they analyze, vastly increasing their sense of engagement with the "real world" of the target

language. Among the possible genres and questions for my French 4 class are: the portrayal of Americans in French or Canadian jokes, intersections of current events and folklore, or looking at how and why genres like riddles, tongue twisters, or rebuses play with language. Students will post their findings and analyses by genre in the "folklore archives" section of our class blog (example 4)—though this does work on a smaller scale with bSpace-style discussion tools. (A description of this online folklore collecting activities is available in English on the my BLC project page: http://dcrf-dev3.berkeley.edu/jennifer/?page_id=40.)

Conclusion

"Little by little," says the French proverb, "the bird builds his nest." Likewise, applying a broad notion of folklore to the foreign language classroom is only one possible theoretical and curricular building block towards the MLA report's long-term goals. But, it is a particularly versatile approach that draws on what students already know, putting complex critical reflections within reach of even beginning language students. For example, Luc Besson's forty-five second Chanel No. 5 perfume commercial—featuring Little Red Riding Hood, three words, and one firm "*chut!*" to a now-obedient wolf—invites students of any level to question how their assumptions about the folktale might differ from those of the target audience. (See my lesson entitled "*Moralités et marketing*" at http://dcrf-dev3.berkeley.edu/jennifer/?page_id=87.) Furthermore, folklore would also have great potential within the restructured and increasingly interdisciplinary model the MLA report proposes. For students who opt to study abroad, for example, an even more concentrated look at folklore could provide critical frameworks for processing experiences. Heritage speakers could collect, compare, and analyze material from their own communities or embark on studies of relevant topics like bilingual jokes and linguistic identity. And, if students do opt to focus on literature, some critical awareness of unofficial cultural production as seen in folklore equips them to better appreciate some of the myriad ways that literature—from Perrault or La Fontaine to Proust or modern poetry—constantly nego-

tiates relationships to other forms of cultural expression.

To quote the late Prof. Alan Dundes's constant refrain to undergraduates who delighted in his introduction to folklore classes at Berkeley, "Folklore is everywhere. You can't escape it." The fact that folklore is inescapable means that even students in a foreign language class already know something about it and can be encouraged to critically apply this knowledge. Their discoveries about the nature and function of folklore stem from their contact with the target language presented by the instructor or collected online by the class. Even without the critical vocabulary and theoretical framework that comes from an explicit study of the discipline of folklore, students can learn to think differently about collective cultural production. At any level of foreign language programs, folklore—or whatever we choose to call it—prompts students to survey the vast and varied terrain between languages and cultures and invites them to see this landscape not just in literature but in email forwards, toasts, tongue twisters, counting-out rhymes, graffiti, or slipped into conversation as proverbial counsel, traditional put-downs, pick-up lines, or pervasive metaphors. Even when the superficially simple and deceptively familiar proverbs, stories, and sayings that we have all seen in language texts are situated properly, they confront students with difference, variation, and profound meaning—sometimes when they least expect it.

Folklore naturally fosters translingual and transcultural thinking by prompting students to examine their own traditions and assumptions that inform their readings of texts in the target language. Such reflections generate readily transferable interpretative schemas and models of how to use—and recognize the limitations of—the knowledge students bring to the classroom. Even if students never go onto higher levels of language or literature study, folklore in the foreign language classroom can help them to be more conscious of language, better readers of any text, and, ultimately, better equipped to interact with other cultures in a rapidly changing world, a world in which folklore—in any language—is inescapable.
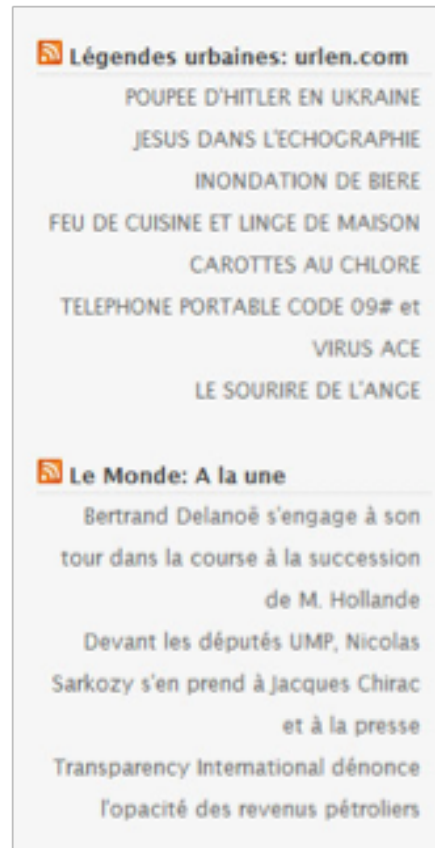
BLC Fellows' Reports

(Example 1: course website for special section of French 4)
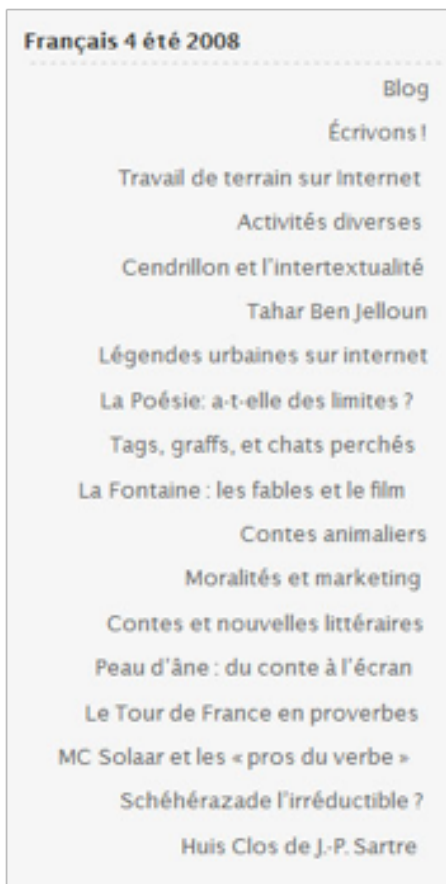
(Example 2: detail of sidebar showing individual lessons)

(Example 3: RSS feeds from a French urban legend site and the newspaper *Le Monde*)

(Example 4:blog categories, including "Folklore Archives" organized by genre)

References

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Reconciling with the Unavoidable: Assessing the Impact of Advertising on the Russian Language

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Introduction

Since the fall of the Soviet Union, advertising has become unavoidable in present-day Russia. The impact of this relatively new medium of communication on the language is yet to be determined. Both native and non-native Russian speakers must interpret often complex advertisements using language loaded with puns, blends, rhyming, cultural allusions, innovated words, unconventional syntactic constructions, etc. Furthermore, the impact of advertising language on Russian is different than it is on English, since Russian is a highly inflected language with six cases and three genders, has lexical verbal aspect (this means there is a different verb for imperfective and perfective aspects, or two verbs in Russian for each verb in English), and has relatively free word order.

Background

I first paid attention to Russian advertising language in early 2006 when I came across the iPod advertisement in figure 1. It struck me because the first sentence of the ad contains an objectless preposition, which is typically not permitted in Russian. The objectless preposition *nad* is particularly conspicuous, because it is a primary, monosyllabic, older preposition—the type that rarely shifts to be used as another part of speech in Russian (Timberlake 2004, 175).

The motivation for using *nad* in this unconventional manner appears to serve a couple of purposes:

- To rhyme with iPod, cf. /nat/ and /pat/ (assuming American English pronunciation of iPod and word-final devoicing);
- As a complement to the bilingual pun within iPod, since the pod is the preposition 'below' in Russian, the opposite of *nad* 'above';
- To reinforce the metaphorical meaning of above-ness, or to be "better" or "cooler" than others.

It appears that this advertisement was written with an ungrammatical construction to achieve a cute rhyme and cross-linguistic pun. It occurred to me that if the website Rambler.ru can violate the rules of Russian grammar for a catchy iPod advertisement, there must be other linguistic phenomena appearing in Russian advertising that exhibit unconventional language usage. As it turns out, advertising language abounds with such phenomena.

The Typology of Unconventional Advertising Language

The first stage of this project consisted of collecting Russian language advertisements that exhibit unconventional features from the point of view of Common Standard Russian. These advertisements were gathered mainly from the Internet, but the collection also includes street advertisements, commercials, and ads from printed media.

Below is a typology of the main unconventional features I identified in the advertising language. Italicized items in the typology are phenomena that appear to be motivated internally in Russian, as opposed to being directly translated or influenced from English or other foreign-language advertising discourse. Not all of these phenomena are successful or liked, but they are also not merely translated from English into Russian, as some might believe. This language in fact carries many traits that are often difficult for English speakers to decipher. Russians adopting a Western concept and reformulating it as their own has been looked at before. For example, Berkeley anthropology professor Aleksei Yurchak discusses the trends of naming businesses—an originally Western concept that has been adopted and reformulated by Russians (Yurchak 2000). Though his focus is mainly cultural anthropological and mine is linguistic, the basic premises are the same.

Lexicon & word-formation:

1. Incorporation of borrowings, especially brands, from outside of Russia
2. *Coining of new words specifically for advertising, e.g.* snikersni
3. New compound formation specifically for the discourse
4. *Punning or blending, often cross-linguistic punning or blending.*
5. Undeclined adjectives, i.e. adjectives that do not add an ending and do not decline for case as is required in Russian

Orthography, spelling & pronunciation:

1. *The usage of an unexpected spelling as both an index to a brand and to Russian pronunciation*
2. The usage of Latin instead of Cyrillic orthography, especially in borrowed words and foreign brands

Syntax and phrasing:

1. Objectless prepositions
2. Unconventional pairing of verb + preposition
3. Unconventional pairing of any set of words: noun + verb, adjective + noun, etc.

Morphology, case usage:

1. Foreign words, especially brand names, not declining
2. *Declining words in unexpected places, e.g. web URLs (essentially the opposite of not declining foreign words, as in (1))*

Other:

1. *Cultural references (often through punning, blending)*
2. Visual reinforcement of message or metaphor in ad
3. Prosodic motivations, especially rhyming

Figure 1. Rambler iPod advertisement (Be ABOVE! Buy an iPod!)

4. Desire to deliver a message in the least amount of time/space possible; quick, concise language

5. Coercive language; lots of imperatives used, largely informal imperatives

The Russian Ads Survey

The main part of this BLC project was spent developing and administering a survey that asked questions about twelve Russian advertisements representing a range of the categories in the typology, as well as a range of types of advertising media, e.g. Internet, television, street advertisements, and print magazines. I developed and administered both Russian and English versions of the survey.

The survey questions asked the survey-takers to: 1) identify grammatical features of words or phrases, e.g. case and gender of nouns; 2) define words or phrases; 3) give reactions to ads or features of ads; and 4) manipulate some aspect of language in the advertisements, either by changing its grammatical form or by rewriting a phrase or construction.

Survey results

A total of 73 Russian speakers took the survey, including 38 native, 25 non-native, and 10 heritage speakers. Since it is not possible to report all of the results of the survey here, I will instead discuss results of one advertisement from the survey, which is shown in Figure 2. Snickers is one of the Western products that was available in Russia early on and its advertising campaign is also long-lived. In response to the question Where have you read or heard this word [*snikersni*] before? one survey-taker responded: "advertisement on TV in the beginning to middle of the '90s," which shows the familiarity of native Russian respondents with the brand and its advertisements.

Questions were asked about the text in the lower right-hand corner of the advertisement ("Don't slow down, Snickers up!"). In particular, questions concerned the neologism *Snikersni*, which is interpreted by most native speakers as an imperative verb formed from the brand name Snickers, which means roughly 'eat a Snickers bar'.

When asked what part of speech the word *Snikersni* is, most Russian respondents answered "verb" (84%), as did most heritage

speakers (70%). The percentage for Russians would perhaps be even higher, but a few respondents chose "other" instead of "verb" and gave an emotional, sarcastic, or more detailed response that showed their recognition of its (intended) usage (see these responses in table). On the other hand, a larger percentage of English native speakers chose "noun" (48%) than "verb" (44%). All respondents who chose "verb" were asked two more questions: what is the infinitive form of the verb and what is the verb's aspect. (The percentages in the table are out of the total number of respondents and not out of those who chose "verb.") For these questions, Russians still responded quite uniformly, mainly suggesting *snikersnut'* as the infinitive form of the verb and the perfective aspect. The heritage and English native speakers gave more heterogeneous responses.

In response to the question, "Have you ever used this word yourself?" a higher percentage of Russians (21%) said "yes" than did heritage or non-native speakers. (Note that one heritage and one non-native speaker answered "yes," but had identified the word as a "noun," which does not correspond to the Russians' answers.)

Figure 2. Street advertisement in Moscow (If you are hungry, don't wait for the bus, IT's not tasty Don't slow down, Snickers up!)

In the open-ended questions asking for general impressions about the ad and the word *Snikersni*, the responses ranged from absolute rejection of the word to resignation to its infiltration into the Russian language. The following are responses from Russian respondents:

- It's a matter of personal taste; I find it atrocious.
- In my opinion, the word is absolutely artificial and sounds horrible.
- An infelicitous word formation. The verb has not entered the language, has not taken root in conversational/spoken language. It hasn't even appeared in anecdotes/jokes.
- Very popular neologism, the first reaction by society was negative, now it's already considered a standard among advertising neologisms.
- The advertisement is intended for teenagers. The attempt is to introduce a word into young people's slang that conforms to the product and at the same time is attractive to the lifestyle of this group.

The following are responses from American expats living in Moscow:

- This is a classic use of Western advertising models in contemporary Russia. I can hear the obnoxious and relentless tv commercials: "*ne tormozi, snikersni*." These ads are absolutely EVERY-WHERE. although I have never actually heard anyone use the verb.
- I've also used it as a joke in reference to the ad. I've never heard it used in any other form other than the imperative.

General response patterns:

The types of responses to questions from all twelve ads in the survey can be divided into four general categories:

1. For some questions about grammatical and lexical forms Russians answered uniformly; non-native speakers answered less uniformly, and heritage speakers fell in between For example, this was the pattern for many of the questions about the *Snikersni* ad.
2. For other questions about grammatical and lexical forms Russians did not answer uniformly; non-native and heritage speakers also did not answer uniformly.

3. For some questions about phrasing Russians had a similar range of associations for phrases; some non-native and heritage speakers had these associations, but most had different associations than the native speakers.
4. For some questions responses from all groups were difficult to interpret; these questions were often about reactions to advertising language or liking/disliking elements of the ads. In some cases, questions about the grammatical or phraseological aspects of the ads also produced ambiguous data, either because the questions I asked did not elicit clear responses or because the features of the ads themselves are difficult to assess.

Assessing the Impact of Advertising on the Russian Language

It is not possible to concretely assess the impact of advertising language on Modern Russian. However, a few conclusions, albeit preliminary conclusions, can be made based on the survey data.

We may be able to interpret areas where there was less uniformity of responses among Russians as indications of areas of the language that are in flux and potentially changing. Much of the variability and potential for change revolves around relatively new cultural concepts, such as brand names, foreign borrowings in general, and the Internet. Grammatical areas particularly affected by this variability include: new word formation, inflection, phraseology, sentence structure, and the forging of new cultural linguistic links.

The survey results can also be used to indicate areas where advertising language has expanded beyond the realm of just advertising. We can use data from the *Snikersni* ad as evidence of this phenomenon, since 21% of native Russian speakers reported using this advertising neologism in their own speech. Other respondents reported hearing the word used by youth in Russia, despite claims by still other respondents that this word has been an unsuccessful neologism and will never catch on in the living language.

Pedagogical implications

In comparing the survey responses of native and non-native speakers, a few patterns emerged. Non-native speakers, especially Russian learners at lower levels, tend to pay more attention to individual forms in the language at the expense of taking into account the broader context (though there were counterexamples to this trend). The tendency may perhaps extend beyond advertising language, but it is highlighted when analyzing this less conventionalized discourse style. Thus it is appears important for instructors to teach perceptual strategies to learners and to directly emphasize the need to view whole contexts instead of individual units as separate and isolated entities. Learners must cultivate an approach to analyzing the language that combines multiple linguistic and paralinguistic clues in order to arrive at an interpretation that a native speaker often reaches intuitively and immediately.

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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.

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