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## A Conversation with Jim Negri: A View from the High School

*by Mark Kaiser, Associate Director, Berkeley Language Center*

**J**im Negri is the Superintendent of the Acalanes High School District (Walnut Creek, Lafayette, Moraga, Orinda, Canyon).

*MK: Could you describe the Acalanes Unified School District for our readers: the number of schools and students, its reputation?*

JN: We are a high school district of approximately 5,800 students. Enrollment in our district is declining; we've lost about eighty students this academic year. We are projected to lose another eighty to a hundred next year, and that trend will continue for the next five years or so. This is a concern in terms of the number of electives we can offer. We're the second-highest-performing high school district in the State of California based on the Academic Performance Index. We have been in that position for a number of years although I've only been here for two years. We send approximately 96% of our students on to higher education. Of those, we send about 76% on to four-year colleges and universities. It varies, but at one of our schools upwards of 85% of students go to a four-year college or university. High academic performance is a hallmark of our district. Between 45% and 50% of our juniors and seniors take at least one Advanced Placement course.

We have almost no English-language-learner population; therefore, we have no Title I funding. We are atypical of California. We are primarily a white, upper-middle-class suburban school district with high achievement. While we are the second-highest-performing district, when you look at the State revenue limit, we come in at 83rd out of 86 high school districts, so we're at the almost rock bottom in terms of funding.

What makes a difference is that we have an incredible community that has supported parcel taxes and bonds. Parent clubs and foundations make a significant difference. For example, this year we have about forty-five teachers that are paid for by our parcel tax. Without that, we would not be able to offer a number of electives.

*MK: What are Acalanes' offerings in foreign languages?*

JN: Spanish is probably the largest sign-up at most of the schools. French, too, gets sign-ups, although we're seeing a declining enrollment in French. At one of our high schools this year, we actually dropped French 1, which has implications for the future. A combination of things is resulting in this declining enrollment. For one thing, the middle school that sends students to that particular high school is doing a great job of teaching French in the seventh and eighth grades, so many of the students are going into French 2 when they enter high school. This is a major cause for not seeing enough sign-ups for French 1. German has gone from being offered at multiple schools to being phased out this year at two of our high schools, and we'll have it at only one other high school. Latin has been a large program with a long history here. In fact, we offer nine sections of Latin. We started Japanese at one of our schools three years ago. We're now up to five full sections. We used to have Mandarin offered through the Contra Costa Community College district, and when the concurrent enrollment issues hit, that was dropped. We are piloting Mandarin at one of our schools this year. Eventually, our goal, as an outcome of our strategic plan, would be to offer Mandarin at three of the four, if not at all of our schools. We do have Japanese. We want to consider Arabic,

although we're really focused on Pacific Rim languages. In summary, we offer Spanish, French, Latin, limited German, expanding Japanese, and we're grappling with Mandarin this year.

**MK:** *In your view, should we offer foreign languages in public high school?*

JN: Absolutely! We should offer it in elementary school. I was fortunate in that I was able to take French at my Catholic elementary school when I was in the fifth grade. My parents are first-generation Americans. Neither spoke English until they started Oakland public schools. They both spoke Italian, but because of how badly non-English-speakers were treated in the 1930s, few in my generation learned the languages spoken by our grandparents. Eventually, I took Italian at Berkeley, went and lived in Italy with an aunt and uncle, and married an Italian woman. Our son was born in Oakland and his first language is Italian. When early in my career, I interviewed for English teaching jobs, one of the questions I was always asked was, "Do you speak another language?" I finally asked, "Why do you ask?" They said, "If you have a grasp of a second language, you understand the grammar, the structure, which is all-important in English." Therefore, I absolutely believe we should be offering languages. That's one of the things we're trying to do with our partner districts. How can we partner with our K-8 districts to offer foreign languages so that we are supporting them and enabling students to take them?

**MK:** *How does Acalanes determine which foreign languages are offered?*

JN: Having only been here for two years, I'll give you recent history. Traditionally, it was Spanish, French, and German. We had a dynamic teacher for years and years that built the Latin program. We're seeing less interest in German. We look at sign-ups. During the budget-cutting years, it was tough to offer classes. Our parcel tax has allowed us to offer those electives and to keep them going. What you typically end up with on the master schedule are forty-two students in French 3. Too many for one class and yet you don't want to be telling students in third-year that you're going to drop twelve of them, so we've been adding classes. So, we look at sign-ups. We're in the second phase of a strategic plan and our mission statement is that "we educate every student to excel and contribute in a global

society." You have to have foreign languages. A lot of the research says we need to have Pacific Rim languages, and we're looking at how we're making that happen. Japanese came about because of a teacher we hired who happened to have taught in Japan. He was credentialed, and he just built the program. One of our challenges as these programs grow is finding more teachers. I was in another district where we started small with Japanese and all of sudden, it was offered in both middle schools and both high schools, and we were having a difficult time finding teachers. The credentialing laws in California don't help in situations where you get a native speaker who has taught in another country, but who doesn't qualify for a California credential.

**MK:** *That was going to be one of my questions later, but I'm glad you touched on it. In your view, which foreign language skills should be emphasized in the teaching of languages at the high school level?*

JN: Ah, that's an ongoing debate. I truly believe the conversational needs to be taught. We've had these discussions: Should we offer a conversational class? Should we offer classes based on literature? I think there has to be a balance. My own experience was that there was too much emphasis on conjugations and not enough on speaking the language. You need to be able to read and write the language. I can speak Italian, but I don't write it well and I don't read it, so I'm not truly bilingual. My son is a good example; he has spoken Italian since birth and has been to Italy a number of times. The only C he received in college was in Italian. His comment was, "Nobody speaks it the way that they're teaching it!" If you're going to use it—and that's the whole purpose of a foreign language—then you need learn how to use it. The thing that always impresses me is that when you turn on the news, you see foreign delegations with great command of English. In foreign countries, everyone speaks English. We don't make that effort. Therefore, I think you have to be able to converse. I look at my nieces and nephews in Europe; they all speak three, four, or five languages and don't even give it a second thought. That doesn't mean you don't have the writing and reading because I think the literature gives you the essence of any culture. Translations don't serve the same purpose. My wife will often say, "That's not a good translation; that's not what it means." So, it's that balance. For high school, we

should be teaching students to speak. Then you need to add all the other skills, although how to do that is an ongoing debate.

**MK:** *I think one of the criticisms of the communicative method is that yes, it teaches them to speak, but on the other hand, we make knowing a foreign language equivalent to being able to order a coffee at a restaurant, i.e., we reduce it to a limited transactional-type of speaking, which is often what our textbooks are focusing on. What we lose in the process is an understanding of a different culture's values, which helps students see American values in perspective. Do you see a danger in reducing foreign language instruction to oral communication?*

JN: The conversational aspect is evident in our Adult Education Program. We have a large sign-up for the conversational courses. Often, they are individuals planning to go to a country for a vacation and they just need to know enough to get along. If, however, you're looking at it from a high school perspective of a UC A-G requirement, then you have to have the complete balance. It's been my experience that we've tilted too far to one side and not stressed speaking the language. I think there has to be a balance. In districts in which I've worked, we've talked about offering a strictly conversational class. A problem is that you don't have enough staffing to do it and you don't have enough periods in a student's schedule, so we've tended to follow the UC A-G requirements.

**MK:** *How are foreign languages classified within the listing of academic courses? In particular, are they academic core, academic elective? Are they grouped with art and music as a performative type of course?*

JN: They're grouped under foreign language. What's coming out of our strategic plan is we want to change the title to World Languages because this whole notion that it's a foreign language is just the wrong message. They are their own department and they are staffed according to our collective bargaining agreement formulas. Technically, languages are an elective because you don't really have to take them. There are some options in our graduation requirement in that you need twenty units in the visual and performing arts/foreign language/career technical education cluster. Recently, we have been discussing whether there should be a graduation requirement in each of those areas because, technically, you can get through high

school without taking a language. In reality, with such a high percentage of students going on to four-year colleges and universities, we have a large percentage of students taking a second, third, fourth, and often a fifth year of a language because they've come out of their middle schools right into the second year. There are a large number of Advanced Placement classes in foreign language.

**MK:** *But if they are grouped with art and music, and they are labeled electives, don't they lose prestige vis-à-vis math and English and other required courses?*

JN: No. As I have indicated, a high percentage of our students go on to college. Many students know that four years of a foreign language is an important consideration in the college application process. Since our partner districts offer excellent foreign language programs in seventh and eighth grade, many of our students enter high school expecting to continue their education in a foreign language.

**MK:** *Is there a mandate for foreign languages other than university entrance requirements? Does the lack of a mandate, if there is a lack of mandate, affect funding for foreign languages?*

JN: That's a good question. There is no State mandate other than, say, the UC or CSU entrance requirements, but in this community, because so many of our parents are college-educated, have studied languages, or worked internationally, there is an expectation that we offer them. There is an expectation that students are going to take a foreign language because it's part of the college prep program. In terms of funding, we don't discriminate against foreign language. It's strictly a matter of coming up with sections based on the number of sign-ups. If anything, we end up adding additional sections because of odd numbers. Sign-ups don't fall into nice little blocks, so we add classes. We added, because of our parcel tax, the notion of keeping electives alive in the seventh period of the school day. That allows students to take a number of those classes that weren't there in past years.

**MK:** *Is there a high school graduation requirement for foreign language?*

JN: Only in the grouping of twenty units from the visual and performing arts/foreign language/career technical education cluster. You can take your twenty units without

touching foreign language, but any of our students going to a four-year university is going to take the second year, if not more. That's the discussion: Do you make a specific foreign language requirement? That's one of the possible recommendations—we're waiting to see what comes out of our strategic planning process.

**MK:** *Does the Acalanes school district attempt to leverage the non-English-speaking members of the community in its foreign language program?*

JN: Not directly. We've had this conversation with our Adult Education program: Could we use them as tutors? We haven't really pursued that path. I've been in districts that have that, but my answer would be no, we haven't really done anything in that area.

**MK:** *Does Acalanes have trouble finding qualified language teachers?*

JN: With Spanish and French it's not a problem. As we get into Japanese, Mandarin, and Arabic—those are going to be more problematic.

**MK:** *How does Acalanes support and encourage language instructors' continued professional development?*

JN: The first way would be the salary schedule: as teachers earn more continuing education units, they move further across the salary schedule. We encourage our teachers to do that. For staff development days and site days, we tend to have job-alike meetings (i.e., meetings of all teachers of the same subject across the district) so they can share. We have supported teachers attending Advanced Placement conferences or subject-area conferences out of our professional development budget.

**MK:** *What could universities in general, and the UC in particular, do to support foreign language instruction in K-12? In what ways could the resources of the Berkeley Language Center be helpful to your school district?*

JN: As we add the new languages, helping us find qualified teachers, or sharing teachers. This district can attract teachers in most of the foreign languages. There are districts that need to be able to partner with higher education to have a teacher come in. We have collaborated with Contra Costa Community College in the past. I think the challenge, not for this district because there are so many resources in the Bay Area, but

as you get out into parts of California, will be distance learning. It's a way to address the situation where you only have a handful of students wanting to take a language, and there's no way you're going to find a teacher for one period of something. How do you offer those students that experience? Is an online, interactive video class an option? Maybe that's where support to the outlying areas can come in. If we needed to, we could free up a student for sixth or seventh period to go over to Diablo Valley College or Berkeley. However, if you're out of the Bay Area, it's an entirely different situation.

Having community college teachers come on campus to teach is a positive way to offer languages, especially if the community college is paying the cost. It handily takes care of that challenge of finding a teacher for only one or two periods of a language such as Mandarin. Acalanes High School has one period of Mandarin this year. It's being offered zero period, and in the afternoon that teacher goes and teaches two periods at another high school in another district.

**MK:** *Does that community college teacher then have to be credentialed for high school teaching?*

JN: No. It depends on how you set it up. If you set it up as a community college class, then the students are concurrently enrolled in the community college. If it is our class, yes, then teachers have to hold California teaching credentials and meet all the *No Child Left Behind* standards. This is where that real partnership with higher education can come in. We'll provide the space, we'll sign the kids up; community colleges or the universities can provide the instructors. It's a great opportunity and a win-win situation for everybody.

**MK:** *Theoretical question: If the UC system were to re-examine language requirements and raise either a foreign language entrance requirement or university graduation requirement, what would the impact be on your school district?*

JN: In our school district, students would just adjust to the new requirements inasmuch as students going to the UC-level universities are already taking three, four, if not five years of language. I don't see a drastic change for us because you don't get into the UCs or the Ivies without four years. I think the impact would be on school districts that aren't able to offer that many sections of a

foreign language. My sister is a high school administrator in Northern California and I can remember talking to her twenty-five years ago when I was at a different location. "I had a bad year," I told her, "only four kids got into Stanford." (The usual number for that school was seven or eight.) She replied, "We had a really good year." When I asked her what constituted a good year, she said, "We had four kids go to a four-year school." Reality check. I think that's where the impact comes. If you raise the requirements, can school districts provide ways to meet them? I guess my personal concern would be this: Are you discriminating by not providing equal access to every student to the UC system? That's the challenge. We're fortunate in this district; we can offer what we need to offer. That's not the norm in all California districts.

I wouldn't necessarily oppose a stricter graduation requirement. The one thing I would want to make sure of is that if we added more classes, that they were not watered down, but at a high level. We're in such good shape right now given our track record of students taking Advanced Placement and being successful that that would not have significant impact.

*MK: Do you think that the situation of foreign languages has changed in high schools? Or the attitudes of parents, the attitudes of the school administrators? Has that importance or the significance of foreign languages changed in the last five to ten years?*

JN: In my experience, not greatly. That's based on my having taught in high-performing schools in high-performing districts. Therefore, I think the expectation is that learning languages is something you must do if you're going on to a four-year college or university. Administrators? I don't see a lot of change. Primarily, your nightmare as an administrator is how can I schedule these classes because you get these odd numbers of sign-ups. You don't want to be telling twelve kids in the third year of a foreign language that you can't offer it to them. You may be forced to offer two sections of twenty-one students, which means that you lose a section somewhere else in your master schedule. It probably doesn't impact the foreign language department; it probably impacts another department—often the visual and performing arts or career/technical education.

*MK: Do you feel that foreign language offerings in the high schools should have a minimum of two, three, or four years, if they're going to be offered? Alternatively, does it make sense to offer a foreign language for only a year or two?*

JN: Up until recently, I always believed that you had to have enough to partially develop some skills. As the movement of career pathways and academies has grown, I have revised that belief. I saw a very interesting program on the Peninsula where they have a health/medical pathway. As part of the pathway, students take one year of Latin because Latin is such a basis of the medical field. Then they take another foreign language. Taking Latin and another language is part of the class, just as you would take calculus in a pre-engineering program. Another interesting program is one offering Mandarin starting in kindergarten. All their physical education classes are in Mandarin. Through elementary school, PE is primarily in Mandarin, and as you get into middle school, there's more speaking, and then you move into the more traditional language class.

*MK: Where do you see foreign languages going in the future?*

JN: I think we're going to see a drop in the traditional European languages. We're seeing that with German fading. We're starting to see it in French. We're going to see more of the Pacific Rim languages coming into play. Maybe the Middle Eastern languages. The Pacific Rim makes perfect sense given California's position, the economy, and trade. That goes hand-in-hand with the economics of the world.

*MK: Jim, thank you so much for taking the time to talk with me today.*

JN: My pleasure.

#### Attention!

The deadline for requesting any new online materials from the BLC for fall semester 2007 is May 15, 2007.

For information, contact Marianne Garner at [mgarner@berkeley.edu](mailto:mgarner@berkeley.edu), 510.642.0767 ext 24 about acquiring language learning materials for your fall classes.

If you would like to schedule use of the BLC facilities for the fall semester, please contact Victoria K. Williams at [victoria@berkeley.edu](mailto:victoria@berkeley.edu), 510.642.0767 ext 19.

## Teaching Poetry through Mime

Our presentation provided a fresh new approach to teaching language and literature through mime. We presented a new twist in teaching *Déjeuner du matin*, a well-known and oft-used poem by Jacques Prévert. We showed how mime could be used to involve students in the lesson from the very beginning. The lesson plan included a step-by-step approach with suggestions for classroom activities ranging from skits, instructor- and student-centered board and group work, to a final creative writing assignment. The presentation demonstrated how the teaching of grammar and literature could be turned into an interactive, engaging, and creative activity where students learn "in spite of themselves." Although the focus is on a French poem, the techniques introduced can be applied to texts and lessons in any language at any level—grammar, poetry, or theater.

— Seda Chavdarian, Senior Lecturer of French  
Seda received a BLC grant for her registration as she was presenting at the fall 2006 FLANC conference at Berkeley.

## FLANC Fall Conference

The Fall Conference of the Foreign Language Association of Northern California (FLANC) was held in Dwinelle Hall at Berkeley on Friday, November 10 and Saturday, November 11, 2006. Sarah Roberts, Lecturer of French, and Victoria Williams of the BLC, serving with others on the FLANC Executive Committee, helped make the conference a success.

Kudos to the UC Berkeley people who presented: Stacey Battis, Nahleen Pang (Berkeley grad, teaching at Lowell High School), Nicole Altamirano, Seda Chavdarian, Julia Koch (Berkeley grad), Jean Marie Schultz (Berkeley grad and faculty), Wakae Kambara, Yoko Hasegawa, Robert Train (Berkeley grad), and Estelle Tarcia.

The 2007 Fall Conference will be held at San Francisco State University.

— Agnes Dimitriou, Lecturer Emerita of Spanish

## Italian Conversation Night at the International House

When I started teaching at Cal in January of 2000, a couple of Italian Department GSIs would meet at the International House to socialize, with a few of their (undergraduate) students in tow. In the beginning, there were only four to six people total, but I quickly realized there was a far greater potential in this more relaxed setting. In fact, after having taught at other institutions, I knew that one of the biggest deficiencies of the modern language course was often the lack of sufficient speaking time due to many factors: shyness or even fear, large class size, and a short lesson involving other activities. The I-House was poised to become the perfect supplemental learning environment necessary for perfecting students' verbal skills, and all I had to do was become more organized and actively seek larger numbers.

To that end, I started going around to various colleagues' classrooms every Wednesday to spread the word. After a few semesters, attendance at Italian Conversation Night had grown to about a dozen and the word had begun to spread to other institutions as well. It was not uncommon for students from Diablo Valley College, San Francisco State University, and various other local colleges and adult schools to attend, and so I started an email list both to keep track of them and to let them know if there were any time or location changes. Right around this period, at one of the Italian Department's semi-annual functions, I received, with great appreciation, the praise of then Chair of Italian, Albert Ascoli, for my efforts at the I-House.

Fast forward another three years to the present and the success of Italian Conversation Night is undeniable: students regularly praise it even in student evaluations, calling it "crucial practice for developing skills and applying lessons," "very helpful in developing conversational skills," and a "powerful learning tool." The current email list has well over a hundred entries and the average number of attendees is approximately twenty (ranging anywhere from fifteen to thirty-five). December 6, 2006, marked the seventh year of these voluntary, one-hour-

per-week conversation sessions and I am extremely pleased at the interest shown in them.

Students often ask me whether other departments do this sort of thing. If any other language instructors or coordinators would be interested in starting a similar conversation night for students in their own department, please feel free to contact me. I would welcome questions and be happy to share my experience and offer advice. Contact me at [biasin@cs.com](mailto:biasin@cs.com).

— *Giovanni Biasin, Lecturer of Italian*



## Vagabond: UC Berkeley's First Undergraduate Multilingual Creative Writing Journal

One afternoon in the fall of 2003, I was sitting in my usual spot on the front steps of Dwinelle, pondering the meaning of life, etc., when a former French 4 student of mine, Tatyana Shmygol, came up to say hi. We got to chatting, and Tatyana began to tell me about an idea she and a friend, Asia Namsaraeva, had come up with for a multilingual creative writing journal, written and produced by and for undergraduates at UC Berkeley. The more we talked, the clearer it became that this was an idea worth pursuing.

Tatyana invited me to take on the role of Faculty Advisor for *Vagabond* and I was delighted to be able to help her and Asia get the journal up and running. We secured funding by approaching colleagues of mine in various departments and campus organizations, devised advertising strategies to attract literary submissions, and recruited other undergraduates to fill staff positions. I also introduced the two student founders to faculty and staff who I thought might be willing to get involved with the journal on a long-term basis. The most valuable of these

introductions was certainly Mark Kaiser, Associate Director of the BLC. He secured BLC funding and affiliation for the journal, as well as use of the BLC's Web server and various BLC-owned foreign language and design software programs. He also provided access to a computer-equipped room on campus so that the group would have a place to work on the journal.

Now in its third year, I am proud to say that *Vagabond* has become an established and successful campus publication. We accept poetry and short prose pieces written by Berkeley undergraduates in any language other than English (accompanied by an English translation). To date, we have published work in Arabic, Bulgarian, Catalan, Chinese, Farsi, French, German, Irish, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Turkish, and Vietnamese. While I remain Faculty Advisor, I am now deliberately taking a less prominent administrative role in the day-to-day running of the journal. As the students grow increasingly competent and independent, I take great satisfaction in the knowledge that they are approaching their original goal of having a literary journal produced by and for undergraduates. Firmly committed to a conception of the university as a supportive intellectual community where students acquire not only subject-specific knowledge but also the habits and skills of lifelong learners and independent thinkers, I believe that *Vagabond* provides an invaluable extension of learning beyond the classroom.

The undergraduate staff of *Vagabond* and I invite others in foreign language and literature programs at Berkeley to get involved! In particular, we would like to ask foreign language GSIs, lecturers, and program coordinators to spread the word about *Vagabond* in their classes this year. If you would like copies of the journal to hand out to students, please don't hesitate to contact me via email at [sarahcroberts@hotmail.com](mailto:sarahcroberts@hotmail.com).

— *Sarah Charlotte Roberts, Lecturer of French and Comparative Literature*

## An Ecological Perspective on Modeling Writing to Language Learners in High School English Classrooms

by Agnes Mazur, PhD Candidate,  
Graduate School of Education

While standardized testing and curricula impose ever more rigid definitions of “types” of learners, language researchers and educators emphasize that many of our most revered categories—such as native speaker, non-native speaker and second language learner—fail to account for the complexities of how people acquire and use language in our increasingly multilingual and multicultural world (Firth and Wagner 1997; Zentella 1999; Cook 1999). Similarly, there is a considerable amount of debate in both research and teaching communities concerning how to classify and teach students with diverse English language needs. Since multilingual students enter our educational system at various ages and with diverse language and educational backgrounds, the division between whom we understand to be mainstream English language arts learners and English as a second language learners is indeterminate (Santos 1992; Matsuda and Silva 2001; Valdés 1992, 2001, 2004).

For my BLC project I designed a qualitative research study of two high school English classrooms in the San Francisco Bay Area of California. The purpose of this study is to look at the teaching of academic writing genres to current and former “second language learners” who have been placed in mainstream classes. Specifically, I focus on modeling practices, since modeling has been viewed as beneficial for teaching writing to language learners (Swales 1990; Flowerdew 1993; Kern 2000). In exploring the activities, utterances, and interactions that shape classroom contexts, I take an ecological perspective (van Lier 2000; Kramsch 2002; Lemke 2002). In doing so, I focus on how learning environments are co-constructed through interactions between teachers and students, the activities they jointly participate in, and by larger political and ideological forces such as the current climate of high stakes testing. With this understanding

of context in mind, I plan to explore the stances teachers and students take towards the class and towards writing. Specifically, I focus on the following questions: 1) How do teachers in two different classroom contexts view their students' educational needs and their roles in addressing these needs? 2) How do these two teachers' views inform their instructional practices? 3) How do these two teachers model and explain expectations for testing genre writing?

### Language Learners and Testing

When parents register their children in California public schools, they are asked what language is spoken in the home. If parents report that their children speak a language other than or in addition to English, these students are tested through the California English Language Development Test (CELDT) and designated as either limited English proficient (LEP) or initially fluent English proficient (IFEP). LEP-designated students are retested yearly, and their performance on this measure determines whether they should remain as LEP or be re-designated as fluent English proficient (RFEP). These labels, however, can be misapplied. For instance, Guadalupe Valdés (2000) has looked at how bilingual secondary students are often misplaced and mislabeled by their schools and teachers, especially if the students are from working class backgrounds. In her case study of four Mexican immigrant students who entered the California public school system in sixth grade, she discusses how the students were kept back in ESL classes to help translate between teachers and newcomer students, and were released from an ESL program in one school, only to be put back into an ESL program when they changed schools or enrolled in community college.

No matter how problematic these labels are in practice, they do play an important role in the increased attention schools must pay to multilingual students since the passage of *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB). The performance on standardized tests of students labeled as LEP, IFEP, and RFEP is monitored by the California Department of Education to meet NCLB mandates, and schools are kept accountable for the progress of these students on standardized

tests. *No Child Left Behind* requires each state to implement standardized measures in English and math to track the progress of both all students and specific sub-groups of students. To fulfill these mandates, in addition to yearly Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR), California has instituted the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE), which students must pass in order to receive a high school diploma. Students designated as language learners have particular difficulty with this test. According to recent statistics for 2006, 77% of all tenth graders passed the language arts portion of the CAHSEE the first time they took the test, while only 38% of students who qualified as LEP did so. In 2006, 39,214 LEP seniors had not passed the CAHSEE language arts section by the end of their senior year ([www.cde.gov](http://www.cde.gov)). The language arts portion of the test includes a multiple choice reading section, a multiple choice writing convention section, and an essay. To varying degrees, this test influences tenth grade reading and writing curricula since students take the test in the spring of their tenth grade year.

### Theoretical Perspectives

#### *The Ecological Perspective in SLA*

Instead of an overarching theory, the ecological metaphor constructs language learning as fluid, multi-dimensional, and occurring on multiple levels of context and multiple time scales. Drawing from various disciplines, it brings together diverse theoretical traditions, including biological ecology, the phenomenological tradition in anthropology, and chaos/complexity theory in physics, among others, to look at learning holistically. Research done from this perspective often takes activity, or language use that is situated in the social and physical world, as its unit of analysis (Kramsch 2000, 10). According to Kramsch:

The ecology metaphor is a convenient shorthand for the poststructuralist realization that learning is a nonlinear, relational human activity, co-constructed between humans and their environment, contingent upon their position in space and history, and a site for struggle for control of social power and memory. (2002, 5).

Therefore, specific interactions between teachers and students are both shaped by and shape the classroom, school, and larger institutional contexts. Even though he does not explicitly take an ecological perspective, I found Hillocks' discussion of rhetorical stance and teaching congenial to an ecological view and helpful in conceptualizing how assessments, such as standardized testing, may shape teachers' pedagogical theories. According to Hillocks, assessments often influence a teacher's rhetorical stance, or the way a teacher thinks about the nature of writing and learning and the kind of learning environment that he or she creates (2002, 21). Moreover, "research and theory suggest that when teachers adopt a rhetorical stance, they also commit to a theory of knowledge and to a theory of teaching implied by its assumptions" (2002, 21). Certain types of assessments, such as the California High School Exit Exam, which ask students to write a single, on-the-spot draft in response to a detailed prompt seem to call for a traditional, product-based approach to teaching writing. However, I would like to add that teachers also adopt a stance toward their students as certain kinds of learners and writers and on what they need educationally because of who they are. This stance towards students' identities may also be shaped by standardized assessments.

Both students and teachers, moreover, are positioned and position themselves in their interactions with each other and in relation to the layers of context that shape the learning environment, including social power dynamics. The taking on of social identities is central to this process of communication, as Lemke puts it, "identities can be conceptualized . . . as being constituted by the orientational stances we take, towards others and towards the contents and effects of our own utterances, in enacting roles within specialized subcultures by speaking and writing in the appropriate registers and genres" (2000, 68). Lemke's suggestion that by using specific registers and genres we perform certain identities, is an important point to consider in relation to viewing the use of models as an aspect of teaching writing.

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# BLC Fellows' Reports

## Designing a Bosnian Language Corpus

by Elena Morabito, PhD Candidate,  
*Slavic Languages and Literatures*

Serbo-Croatian was the principal language of the former Yugoslavia and was the first language of Slavic-speaking inhabitants of four of the six republics—Serbia, Croatia, Montenegro, and Bosnia-Herzegovina. With the war in the early 1990s and the disintegration of Yugoslavia, the language ceased to function officially. In its place, three official languages have been declared: Serbian, Croatian, and Bosnian. Increasingly, speakers have been expressing national and ethnic identities through linguistic differences, and these languages have been diverging since the fall of Yugoslavia. Differences are most obvious in the lexical domain: in Bosnia, emphasis is on reinforcing the Oriental lexical heritage (words of Arabic, Persian, and Turkish origin), and reintroducing many archaic words. To document this emerging language, I designed a Bosnian language corpus prototype as a Berkeley Language Center Fellowship project. A corpus is an electronic body of texts intended to give a representative sampling of written language material. Corpora are useful for both pedagogy and research; at the December 8, 2006, BLC Fellows Forum I focused on corpus design, on defining a text as “Bosnian,” and on sociolinguistic research using a corpus, whereas for this Newsletter I focus on the corpus as a pedagogical tool.

The corpus is designed for teachers of Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian (BCS) so that they might teach the Bosnian variant more effectively. Textbooks and grammars such as Ronelle Alexander's *Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian, a Grammar with Sociolinguistic Commentary* and *Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian, a Textbook with Exercises and Basic Grammar* are good resources that can be supplemented with other material, and there is considerable other material available for Serbian and Croatian. There is, however, a general lack of other pedagogical resources for contemporary Bosnian.

With such a corpus, a language teacher can effectively illustrate characteristics of

the Bosnian language. If a textbook labels as Bosnian a word such as *selamiti se* (the verb “to greet,” which is different from what Serbs and Croats use), the teacher can type this verb into the corpus tool and get a list of word environments from actual texts. Examples are authentic, and given in context; the size of the text sampling depends on the corpus tool. With usage environments, one can determine whether a given verb is used in all domains of written communication; it may only be found in dialogues, which indicates that the word is not as accepted in written communication, but that it is used in conversation. Differences in register are crucial for foreign language learners: if a student of Bosnian uses a Bosnian-specific word meant for one domain of communication in another where it is inappropriate, the learner's “outsider” status may be reinforced.

A Bosnian corpus can also be helpful in determining to what extent a word is actually used in the language, or whether it is only prescribed. For example, Senahid Halilovic's 1996 *Bosnian Orthography*, which is normative and obligatory for state institutions, does not give an entry for the common BCS word for “ball,” *lopta*; readers are referred to the “preferred” Bosnian term *hlopta*. This reflects the post-war emphasis on the letter *h*, which is characteristic of Bosnian; it is being reintroduced into usage in words where it was once written and pronounced but then lost under the influence of Serbian. Furthermore, *h* is now being normatively introduced into words where it is not etymologically justified. A corpus, with its authentic examples, can help determine the degree to which a certain prescribed term is actually used; students would see that both *hlopta* and *lopta* are used in print. Learners of Bosnian must be aware of prescribed forms, and should know how often they are actually used.

Corpora can also be used to give accurate definitions: a single word may have a variety of meanings in different contexts, and showing students a variety of contexts, rather than simply giving them an English equivalent, gives them a much more valid grasp of the meaning. The teacher can type the target word into the corpus tool, and is given lists of sentences from various texts

where the word occurs. One possible class exercise is to construct a cloze (gap) exercise from sentences containing a given word. Students must then decide what the missing word is and fill in all its morphological variations in the blanks. Thus they will come to know more meanings for the word and more contexts in which they may use it. At the same time, students are encountering authentic examples of language use. Another exercise involves giving students a list of sentences, each containing a new vocabulary item: students decide on definitions for the word, attempting to cover all contexts given. In this way, they are not memorizing a standard definition, but are creating their own concepts from the given contexts; this method may be more useful for internalizing the new language, as it involves various cognitive skills rather than simple memorization.

Corpora are valuable tools for every language teacher, and are even more important when the language is relatively “new,” as with Bosnian. There are comparatively fewer resources available for the BCS teacher, and an electronic collection of Bosnian texts can help in several ways: the teacher can show appropriate contexts for Bosnian-specific words, show students whether certain prescribed words are used in popular writing, and can also create authentic vocabulary and morphology-based exercises.

At present, my corpus is still in the prototype phase: it exists as a collection of computerized files, formatted in UTF-8 with specific tags for title, author, year, number of words, genre, and source. My goal is to enlarge it to at least one million words so that it can be useful for sociolinguistic research as well as for pedagogy. At that point, I will input the pre-formatted texts into a corpus tool and it will be available on the Web.



## Designing Communicative Tasks for the Bulgarian Language Classroom

by Stiliana Milkova, PhD Candidate,  
*Comparative Literature*

### Project Rationale

This project grew out of my experience teaching Beginning through Advanced Bulgarian at Berkeley. A less commonly taught language, Bulgarian is offered on a two-year cycle, which explains why there has been little continuity in developing and sustaining a database of teaching materials and aids for the instructor. Teachers of Bulgarian in America have been lucky to have Ronelle Alexander's *Intensive Bulgarian: A Textbook and Reference Grammar*, the only scholarly textbook for English speakers and an excellent tool for grammar instruction. My project was inspired by the structure and content of this textbook and aimed to facilitate the instruction and acquisition of Bulgarian with *Intensive Bulgarian* as the primary text. Each chapter of the textbook opens with a dialogue between the main characters that meet and interact during a train journey. The dialogue contains examples of new grammatical forms while the lesson itself supplies detailed, informative, and very useful explanations of these forms. Each dialogue also revolves around a theme or topic relevant to Bulgarian culture.

As a Bulgarian language instructor I became aware of the need to supplement the textbook with materials for in-class communication whereby students activate and access the acquired forms while participating in meaningful conversation with each other and with the teacher. My project used the themes and situations in the lessons' dialogues as the background for a set of communicative classroom activities that engage students in meaning making in communicative situations and scenarios. The project aimed to provide supplementary materials that expand on the themes of each dialogue and allow additional opportunities for oral production in a range of communicative and cultural contexts. My target audience is second- or third-semester learners who have learned enough grammatical forms and vocabulary to begin to develop oral fluency.

### Project Description

The purpose of the project was to create a handbook with model communicative tasks for five chapters of *Intensive Bulgarian*. The Bulgarian instructor can use these tasks directly or modify them to fit her specific classroom needs. The handbook is composed of a topical module for each of chapters 16 through 20 of the textbook and offers a graduated sequence of tasks in each module. Each module provides students with activities that encourage and enable their communicative competence in a range of culture-specific situations. In addition, each module activates, wherever possible, grammatical constructions introduced in the lesson but uses them in a communicative context relevant to the real world. In short, the goal of the tasks in each module is to provide opportunities for students to interpret, express, and negotiate meaning in Bulgarian while accessing the pertinent forms.

Each module opens with a list of themes and situations as well as grammatical structures covered in the respective lesson. Each module consists of eight to ten classroom activities that increase in difficulty and build on each other while introducing relevant background and exposing students to Bulgarian cultural realities. At the end of the module students try to enact real-world scenarios or perform a Bulgarian identity. Since interaction requires various steps and tasks, each activity is designed as a multi-layered communicative event that gradually complicates the cognitive, linguistic, and interpretive demands made on the students. Each activity is preceded by a task rationale and accompanied by detailed instructions for the teacher. At the end of each module I suggest other types of activities and resources that the teacher might find useful.

The internal organization of each module traces a progression from grammar and vocabulary acquisition to the acquisition of cultural knowledge through language instruction. In other words, it scales from activities focused on linguistic form and vocabulary activation to learning about Bulgarian culture through communicative activities. This trajectory underscores my own process of learning about communicative

pedagogy and how to apply it to the Bulgarian language classroom.

Each module opens with a jigsaw task based on the lesson's vocabulary, grammar, and themes. The module continues with information gap tasks that combine structured input activities with structured output exercises in which students both attend to, and produce, form and meaning by exchanging information relevant to the theme or topic of the lesson (for example, pets and pet culture in Bulgaria). The subsequent tasks complicate the process of requesting and supplying information by adding new vocabulary and cultural background on the topic in question. Next, students participate in decision-making activities, problem solving, or creative language use connected to a particular cultural context (for instance, pit bulls as pets in Bulgaria). Finally, students enact dialogues in which they take on different roles, including that of a Bulgarian, and partake in conversations about Bulgarian cultural attitudes related to each specific topic. Students also engage in discussions about various cultural issues and compare them to their own native cultures. These activities are designed as multi-step tasks that expose students to grammatical form, build vocabulary, and create communicative contexts by asking them to process linguistic data, to share personal information, and to negotiate meaning through learning about cultural practices in Bulgaria.

The handbook I have designed will be available in both print and digital form. Although an online format was not originally part of this project, my next step will be to create an expanded online version that offers a wealth of textual and visual materials for both students and instructors of Bulgarian.

### Methodology and Reflections on the Process

My project began with a reevaluation of my own pedagogical approach. I became aware that I stressed grammar acquisition and used a range of pattern practice and substitution drills (e.g., fill-in-the blanks) to transmit knowledge to my students, echoing the way I had been taught English in Bulgaria. Omaggio Hadley's imperative to provide opportunities for practicing language in a range of contexts likely to be encountered in the target culture and to encourage

# BLC Fellows' Reports

communicative interaction among students (2001) was especially informative given the goals of my project. Yet, since communication entails the interpretation, expression, and negotiation of meaning (Lee and VanPatten 1995; Omaggio Hadley 2001), I sought a way to incorporate the processing and production of linguistic structures in classroom communicative interactions.

Different definitions of “task” conceptualize it broadly as any interactive communicative activity relevant to the real world (Long 1981) or more concretely, as any communicative activity focused on meaning making rather than linguistic structure (Nunan 1989). Lee and VanPatten’s argument for finding a balance between a communicative task and the production of grammatical form (1995) seemed most applicable to the goals of my project. I saw the use of cultural materials and Bulgarian-specific contexts as a means to motivate students to carry out a range of communicative transactions relevant to Bulgarian culture while learning form in the process. I began developing my communicative tasks with these ideas in mind.

I started with standard structured input tasks that require students to process cultural information for meaning. Then I moved to designing tasks that also ask students to actively engage in the production of meaning in a cultural context. The final step in creating the tasks was considering how to integrate the cultural component. It occurred to me that I could teach culture through language since language itself carries cultural baggage. As Claire Kramsch writes, language is invariably tied to processes of socialization and acculturation (1998). My idea was to encourage students to produce linguistic structures particularly salient to a Bulgarian cultural situation, that is, to use forms required by a specific context. At the same time, I wanted to use specific cultural scenarios to teach concrete phrases, expressions, and germane vocabulary. In learning how to talk about pets, for instance, students also learn about the idiosyncratic pet culture in Bulgaria: that you do have to watch your step on the sidewalk, for example, or that pit bulls are well liked as pets.

The other modules involve cultural topics such as a taxi ride, medical conditions, making a phone call, and Bulgarian cuisine and different food establishments. These quotidian topics allow for multiple cultural situations and real-life scenarios. On the one hand, learning how to negotiate with a taxi driver and deal with his flirtatious personality, for instance, students also get to know Bulgarian culture and participate in the sociocultural dimension of language. On the other hand, by being exposed to such situations in the classroom, students access and activate useful vocabulary. In short, the tasks I have designed make room for communicative classroom interaction through exposure to Bulgarian cultural realities. That is, the use of the language in a range of contexts teaches students of Bulgarian about cultural interactions as well. My own process of researching and reflecting on methodology exemplifies a shift from a more grammar-based instruction to a communicative approach that teaches culture through language and language through culture. I found this approach particularly useful in designing communicative tasks for the Bulgarian language classroom.

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## Designing a Content-based Module for First-Year Mandarin Chinese Heritage Students

by Liu Li, Lecturer, East Asian Languages and Cultures

My project focuses on the design of materials for first-year Mandarin Chinese heritage students. My term, “Mandarin heritage student,” is adapted from the term “heritage speaker,” as used by Guadalupe Valdés (2000). It refers to a student who was raised in a home in which Mandarin Chinese is spoken, who speaks or passively understands Mandarin, and who is to some degree bilingual in English and Mandarin. Mandarin heritage students can express simple ideas in informal Mandarin. They generally do well when Chinese sentence structures are similar to those found in English. However, when they try to express complex ideas or encounter situations where they must use sentence structures unique Chinese, they often produce either unsophisticated or unintelligible sentences. In addition, reading and writing Chinese characters is also a great challenge to them.

Taking the characteristics of the heritage student into the consideration and drawing on my nine years of teaching experience, I feel the most efficient way to teach these students is to provide opportunities for them to employ their linguistic strengths to make up for their linguistic deficiencies. In other words, I teach them to use their listening and speaking skills to learn to read and write Chinese characters, and to construct sentences and paragraphs. The overall pedagogical strategy of this project is to use visual and audio materials as the basis for heritage students’ acquisition of reading and writing skills. (This approach is quite different from the one typically taken

for non-heritage students in which is the students' more developed reading skills are used to develop listening skills.) Based on this pedagogical notion, I used audiovisual materials to create a module on Chinese food that incorporates grammar, cultural content, and practice reading and writing Chinese. Because of the complexity of the *ba* construction (a grammatical form unique to Chinese) and the irregularity of the verbal particle *le* (indicating completion), beginning heritage students have trouble producing correct forms. However, because heritage students have passive knowledge of these forms, they understand the meanings conveyed by the use of *ba* and *le*. I designed a module comprising teaching materials and culture activities for five class days to teach these challenging forms.

To elaborate on this module, let me take day one as an example. The first step is preparation: students go to the website to learn the required vocabulary, making use of the audiovisual help. They then do the exercise for learning characters in context. This exercise exploits their listening skills and their passive understanding of the *ba* construction. While they listen to sentences containing new vocabulary and using *ba*, they are asked to match what they have heard to one of the two written sentences they have read.

The second step is an in-class activity. The teacher will use a different approach to review the new vocabulary. By comparing how vegetables are grouped in China and the U.S., students learn that traditionally, Chinese people group vegetables by seasons and regions. (Before the refrigerator and green house were common in China, northerners, for example, would not be able to get spinach or tomatoes in winter.) Another very typical Chinese way of grouping food is by its nature: it is warm, neutral, or cool, according to categories of Chinese medicine. (Ginger is warm; carrots, potatoes, and soybeans are neutral; and napa cabbage, mung beans, and cucumbers are cool.) By discussing and grouping the food, students review and relearn the vocabulary as well as the cultural knowledge, nicely leading into the subject of preparing of Chinese food and the introduction of the verb complement construction. The various types of verb complements are common in modern

Mandarin, and play a role in *ba*-sentences. In class, students are provided contexts and opportunities to use the vocabulary they prepared and to produce elementary verb complement forms. At the same time, they also explore Chinese food culture with which they are at least partially familiar, but of which they now have a deeper understanding.

The third part is the reinforcement activity. Students will be assigned homework to reinforce their knowledge of the new vocabulary and sentence structures. A list of verbs and words that can be complements is provided, and students are asked to make as many verb complement phrases as possible. Although it is a simple production process, there is room for creativity because one verb can go with many different complements. Even so, these phrases have to make sense. To judge if a verb complement phrase makes sense or not, students have to really understand the grammar rule and the meaning of the phrase. In creating verb complement phrases, students also practice writing characters.

This module can be viewed from the progression of teaching to learning *ba*-sentence structure. The process begins with noticing *ba*-sentences and producing verb complement phrases as shown above. Then, by hearing and reading authentic materials on Chinese food, cooking directions, and restaurant menus, students learn vocabulary and *ba*-sentence structure in context. Next, having exposed students to many *ba*-sentences in various contexts, the teacher inductively guides them to come up with the rules of the *ba*-sentence structure and to produce *ba*-sentences in writing. The subsequent phase is gaining deep understanding of *ba*-sentences by comparing the various forms of the *ba*-sentence in oral and written discourse. In spoken discourse, the *ba*-sentence is used more frequently and often appears in complete form, whereas in written recipes the *ba*-sentence is used less and often only the object and the verbal phrase appear, while the subject and even the character *ba* are omitted. By making comparisons, students will understand that the most important parts of the *ba*-sentence are the object and the verbal phrase that indicates what the subject does to the object. The final step is

to produce a short essay using *ba*-sentences structures without any indication from the teacher as to whether *ba*-sentences are needed. This will demonstrate whether students have absorbed how to independently produce appropriate *ba*-sentences.

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## Did you know that...?

by Richard Kern, Director, BLC

...secret writing is almost as old as writing itself? Steganography refers to physically hidden writing (compared to cryptography, which refers to writing encrypted through codes and ciphers). Herodotus tells of how the exiled Demaratus warned the Greeks of attack by the Persians in 480 BC by scraping the wax from a wax tablet, writing his message on the underlying wood surface and then covering it with wax again, so sentries along the road would see only a blank tablet. Messages were also written on messengers' shaved heads, hidden as their hair grew back, and revealed when the messengers reached their destinations and their heads were shaved again. The use of invisible ink goes back to at least the first century AD, and Giovanni Porta, a sixteenth-century Italian scientist, developed ink that would write on a hard-boiled egg through its shell without leaving a trace on the shell itself.

Modern technology provides new ways of hiding messages. During World War II, photographic technology allowed documents to be drastically reduced in size, enabling them to be hidden as a microdot on a period or on the dot of an *i* or *j* within a camouflaging text. Once they reached their destination, messages could be read with a microscope. The idea of the microdot is still alive today. For example, to hide vehicle identification numbers (VIN) on car parts, some manufacturers spray tiny laser discs etched with the VIN onto major parts and the chassis—invisible to the naked eye, but readable with a microscope.

The Internet offers perhaps the richest medium for hiding written messages, allowing them to be inserted into digital photographs or music files but leaving no outward trace that the files have been altered (detection requires computer programs that can notice statistical deviations from expected data patterns in images or music). Like a “dead drop,” this kind of file insertion allows messages to be transmitted without any direct communication between sender and receiver. This is reportedly the technique used by an apprehended terrorist group that plotted to blow up the American Embassy in Paris in 2001. If you are interested in learning more about steganography or cryptography, check out *The Code Book* by Simon Singh (New York: Doubleday, 1999).

## News from the Education Abroad Program

by Bruce Hanna, Director, Strategic Marketing and Communications, EAP

### EAP's Rod Sangster Retires

After completing nineteen years of service to EAP and the University of California, Rod Sangster will be retiring from his position as Regional Director this year, in order to concentrate on his linguistics research.

Rod has been a charter member of the Steering Committee of the UC Consortium for Language Learning and Teaching, representing EAP. As the Language Coordinator for EAP, his work with the Consortium centered on achieving a new level of academic cooperation and integration between the language instruction provided by EAP abroad and that of the campus-based language programs. Rod worked tirelessly with campus language faculty to design and implement well-integrated language and culture curricula for EAP programs in Russia, Italy, France, and Germany, among other countries.

Formerly a member of the faculty of the Slavic Department at Indiana University, Rod directed Indiana's Slavic Language and Area Center as well as its summer Slavic Workshop in the 1970s and '80s. In his last years at Indiana, he was Associate Dean and Director of the Indiana University system-wide Overseas Study office. Upon coming to UC in 1988, he was instrumental in the expansion of EAP into Russia, Thailand, Indonesia, Australia, and New Zealand. After becoming Regional Director for Europe in the mid-1990s, he concentrated on designing programs that maximize the use of the local culture as an integral part of the language learning process abroad, and on developing programs that provide students with no prior foreign language experience the opportunity to initiate formal language training while encountering a new culture.

In retirement, Rod will be completing a new book on meaning as an organic property of linguistic signs, and starting another one on applying linguistic sign theory to capture the underlying meaning of the symbols used in indigenous art.

## Notes from the Director

by Richard Kern

Welcome back to another eventful semester at the BLC! We have a great lineup of speakers for our spring BLC Lecture Series and we invite you to attend as many talks as your schedule allows. We will be continuing our yearlong series of technology-for-teaching talks, which will culminate on April 26 with a technology workshop for the Peralta Community College District, to be held from 2:00-5:00 pm at Laney College.

We will also continue our reading groups for lecturers. For the past year and a half, Claire Kramsch has graciously invited language lecturers to a potluck dinner, and reading and discussion group held once a month at her home. Claire will continue to hold the reading group one Tuesday evening a month this semester. In recognition of the difficulty that some lecturers have in attending evening events, we have instituted a second reading group to be held one Wednesday each month, with lunch provided by the BLC. The daytime reading group meets in the BLC library (B-37 Dwinelle). Look for Lisa Little's email to lecturers for dates. All language lecturers are invited to attend one or both!

One of the most enjoyable parts of my job is to work with the BLC Fellows. Each week, Associate Director Mark Kaiser, Outreach Coordinator Lisa Little, and I meet with the Fellows to discuss their research projects. In this issue you will find the reports of our four fall semester Fellows: Agnes Mazur studied how writing was taught in two multicultural high school classrooms; Stiliana Milkova developed materials for a communicative approach to teaching Bulgarian; Elena Morabito designed an electronic corpus for the Bosnian language; and Liu Li designed multimedia materials for teaching written Mandarin to heritage speakers. This spring five other BLC Fellows will be working on exciting new projects having to do with language learning and teaching. Mark Kaiser recently queried past BLC Fellows about the impact of the program on their teaching and research. The responses we have received so far have been overwhelmingly positive, showing a major impact on their teaching, their research, and (in the case of grad students) their search for a job after graduation. Lecturers and graduate students who would like to apply for a BLC Fellowship for either the fall or spring

semester of the 2007-08 academic year are reminded of the March 1, 2007, deadline for applications.

This spring the BLC will produce a special publication of last November's lecturer tribute to Claire Kramsch (*Claire Kramsch and the BLC: Her Legacy to Berkeley Language Lecturers*). If you live outside the Berkeley area and would like us to send you a copy, please let us know.

Have you thought about presenting a teaching innovation at FLANC or another conference? Lecturers should keep in mind that the BLC has modest funds available to defray registration and travel costs. This is a great way to meet colleagues at other institutions and to share ideas. The deadline for applying for support is April 2 for this spring and November 1 for next fall.

Finally, 2007 brings good news from the Modern Language Association, which reports that the job market for modern languages is up 3.6 % from last year and up 9.7 % compared with 2003-04. Now there's a trend to celebrate

## Books of Interest

BLC Director Richard Kern recommends newly-released books of interest to language professionals.

Alderson, J. Charles. *Diagnosing Foreign Language Proficiency: The Interface between Learning and Assessment*. Continuum, 2006.

Allan, Keith and Kate Burridge. *Forbidden Words*. Cambridge UP, 2006. (Examines how we use language to swear, to insult, and also to be politically correct.)

Ayoun, Dalila, ed. *French Applied Linguistics*. John Benjamins, 2007.

Borg, Simon. *Teacher Cognition and Language Education: Research and Practice*. Continuum, 2007.

Byrnes, Heidi. *Advanced Language Learning: The Contributions of Vygotsky and Halliday*. Continuum, 2007.

Byrnes, Heidi, Heather Weger-Guntharp, and Katherine A. Sprang, eds. *Educating for Advanced Foreign Language Capacities: Constructs, Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment*. Georgetown University Round Table on Languages and Linguistics. Georgetown UP 2006.

Gass, Susan M. and Alison Mackey. *Data Elicitation for Second and Foreign Language Research*. Second Language Acquisition Research Series. Lawrence Erlbaum, March 2007.

Horwitz, Elaine K. *Becoming A Language Teacher: A Practical Guide to Second Language Learning*. Allyn & Bacon, 2007.

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Thornbury, Scott and Diana Slade. *Conversation: From Description to Pedagogy*. Cambridge UP, 2006.

van den Branden, Kris. *Task-Based Language Education*. Cambridge UP, 2006.

Webster, Jonathan J., ed. *Language and Education (Collected Works of M.A.K. Halliday)*. Continuum, 2007.

## 2007-08 BLC Professional Development Fellowships for Language Lecturers

**Deadline: March 1**

The Berkeley Language Center is pleased to announce the availability of two one-semester fellowships for Unit 18 lecturers or language program coordinators for the academic year 2007-08.

**&**

## 2007-08 BLC Instructional Research Fellowships for Graduate Students

**Deadline: March 1**

The Berkeley Language Center is pleased to announce the availability of up to six one-semester GSRships (IV) for the academic year 2007-08 (pending authorization of funding).

If you are interested, we strongly encourage you to discuss your research project proposal with Richard Kern or Mark Kaiser. For an application form, please contact the BLC Business Manager, Ana Arteaga, 510.642.0767 ext 22, aablc@berkeley.edu.

## Notes from the Associate Director

by Mark Kaiser

It seems that in every Newsletter I am reporting to you on either the acquisition of a new technology at the BLC or a new application of an old technology, and this Newsletter is no exception.

I am pleased to announce that the BLC has purchased video conferencing and other support equipment for 33 Dwinelle to enable the teaching of language classes over the Internet, in particular to other UC campuses. Departments offering courses in the less commonly taught languages can now offer those classes to other UC campuses, thereby augmenting their enrollments (the credit hours of a student enrolled at another campus accrue to the department of the campus where the course is offered). Distant education classes have been taught successfully for the past four years by the Scandinavian Department (Karen Møller in Danish and Sirpa Tuomainen in Finnish).

The equipment consists of a Polycom video camera and support equipment, a 42-inch monitor, and a fax machine; we may purchase a document camera as well. Students at the remote location control the camera here, just as the instructor here can control the camera at the remote location. The fax machine is used as one method (others include email attachments, drop boxes in bSpace) of transferring documents between student(s) and instructors. Those of you who were able to attend Karen and Sirpa's hands-on presentation in November will confirm that working with students at a remote location is not as awkward as one might imagine. The biggest hurdle would appear to be working through the semester and quarter scheduling differences across the UC system.

Over the winter break my colleagues and I began experimenting with digitization of film clips and recording information about the clips into a database. Originally, I was looking for some clips to illustrate particular aspects of Russian language use for my second-year class, but the more I watched the clips, the more interesting cultural, discourse, and linguistic features I was able to find and would want to be able to use in other Russian language classes. Given the amount of time involved in digitizing the

clip, it made sense to record the information into a database so that it could be retrieved easily.

We will be developing a local database for this new collection of film clips. By inputting information about each clip as it is digitized, we will build a library of clips that could then be searched for particular relevant information. So, for example, a short scene where someone asks for directions could be coded for discourse markers (asking/giving directions; initiating a conversation with strangers), linguistic features (imperatives), or cultural features (city street scene). We also catalog information about the movie, the year(s) portrayed in each clip, and the file format of the clip. The clip is then stored on our Web server.

Due to the restrictions of copyright law, we cannot make the clips publicly accessible. Therefore, the database will be accessible only from computers on the Berkeley network and with a password. Instructors will be able to search for particular items, view the clip, and then make the clip accessible to students through a link on their bSpace course site.

This semester we have hired two undergraduate students to help with the digitization of clips. Please bring your video (or audio) materials to B-22 (Mondays 1-3, Tuesdays 1-2:30, Wednesdays 1-3, Thursdays 11-12:30), and we will digitize the materials and put the basic information about the film and clips into the database. However, you, the instructors, will need to supply the discourse, linguistic, and cultural markers for each clip—a time-consuming process—but by building the library of video clip materials, we can create a trove of information for our students.

## 2006-07 Title VI Travel Grant for Foreign Language Lecturers

### Spring Deadline: April 2 (travel through 08/01/07)

The Berkeley Language Center provides limited funding for foreign language lecturers to attend professional conferences. The BLC will reimburse lecturers for up to \$500.00 if you are presenting a paper or serving in an official capacity, and \$300.00 to attend a conference (one-time only).

Include a copy of the program, an abstract, and/or a letter of invitation with your application form.

University regulations state that the Berkeley Travel Office will only reimburse travelers who provide original receipts in their own name. There are no exceptions to this rule. Travel expense reimbursements must be processed **within two weeks** after conference travel. You are required to sign a 'UC Travel Voucher Form' to complete the paperwork. Please do not mail receipts to the office. The BLC will reimburse only for conference registration, airfare, local transportation, and hotel room costs.

If you have further questions or would like an application form, please contact the BLC Business Manager, Ana Arteaga, 510.642.0767 ext 22, aablc@berkeley.edu.

## **Learning, Change, and Power: Competing Frames of Technology and Literacy**

**February 2**

Mark Warschauer, Associate Professor, Department of Education & Department of Informatics, University of California, Irvine

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## **From National Educational Standards to Language Use**

**February 23**

Sally Sieloff Magnan, Professor of French & Director of The Language Institute, University of Wisconsin-Madison

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## **Too Much and Not Enough Identity: Constituting English in Asian Language Policy Circles**

**March 16**

Joseph Lo Bianco, Chair, Language & Literacy Education, University of Melbourne, Australia

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## **Iconic Creativity in Haiku: A Linguistic Analysis of Basho's Revisions**

**April 6**

Masako Hiraga, Visiting Scholar, Linguistics, University of California, Berkeley

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## **Instructional Development Research Projects**

**December 8**

BLC Fellows Anne E. Dwyer, L. Mieka Erley, and Michael Huffmaster, GSRs; and Noriko K. Wallace and Lihua Zhang, Lecturers

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**All lectures are Friday, 3–5 pm, in 370 Dwinelle Hall with the exception of March 16, to be held in B-4 Dwinelle.**

*The Berkeley Language Center Lecture Series is sponsored by the College of Letters and Science and by Berkeley's eight National Resource Centers under a Title VI grant from the U.S. Department of Education.*

## **Southwest Association for Language Learning Technology (SWALLT) Spring Conference at DigitalStream**

**March 22-24, 2007**

<http://www.humanities.uci.edu/hirc/SWALLT/>

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## **41st Annual TESOL Convention and Exhibit**

**March 22–24, 2007**

Seattle, WA  
<http://www.tesol.org>

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## **Southwest Conference on Language Teaching (SWCOLT)**

**April 12–15, 2007**

Las Vegas, NV  
<http://www.>

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## **AAAL Annual Conference**

**April 21-24, 2007**

Costa Mesa, CA  
<http://www.aaal.org>

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## **International Association for Language Learning Technology (IALLT) 2007**

**June 19-23, 2007**

Tufts University, Medford, MA  
<http://www.iallt.org>

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## **Foreign Language Association of Northern California (FLANC) Fall Conference**

**November 10, 2007**

San Francisco State University  
<http://www.fla-nc.org/>

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## **The 123rd Annual Modern Language Association of America (MLA) Convention**

**December 27-30, 2007**

Chicago, IL  
<http://www.mla.org>

## About the Berkeley Language Center

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

The mission of the BLC 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 BLC 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.

## BLC Executive Committee, 2006–07

Charles Derden  
Wakae Kambara  
Mark Kaiser  
Richard Kern  
Jan Kieling  
Claire Kramsch  
Lisa Little  
Karen Møller  
Marilyn Seid-Rabinow  
Victoria K. Williams

## BLC Newsletter Committee, 2006–07

Mark Kaiser  
Richard Kern  
Lisa Little  
Sarah C. Roberts  
Victoria K. Williams

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