

LANGUAGE TEACHING AT BERKELEY

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At no time since the launch of Sputnik has the study of foreign languages been so prominent on the national radar. The radar metaphor is particularly apt, as this concern in Washington over our nation's well documented low level of competency in foreign languages is dominated by national security issues. So, although the recently announced National Security Language Initiative does involve some funding for language education in K-12, some funding to support increase participation by students in study abroad, and some funds supporting teacher development, the thrust of the initiative is related to national security: only certain "critical" languages are affected and the vast majority of the funding will be through the Department of Defense. For details, see <http://www.state.gov/r/pal/prs/ps/2006/58733.htm>.

Institutions of higher education have done a fair degree of soul searching with regard to the curriculum and the various purposes for studying a foreign language and culture (see Nikolaus Euba's piece in

this issue). At the university, the purposes of studying a foreign language are much broader than those that interest the federal government. Rather, the academy seeks to explore questions of language and identity, the embodiment of values in language, the structure and meaning of texts and their contexts, and knowledge of the specific texts of the target culture. Language teachers must often balance the competing, and often very practical, interests of their students, on the one hand, and the broader goals of a liberal arts education in the humanities, of which foreign language study forms an integral part, on the other.

Last October the University of California Consortium for Language Learning and Teaching hosted a two-day conference to address the issue of what a national foreign language policy might look like from the view of foreign language experts (in applied linguistics and literary and cultural studies) and to discuss the new initiatives coming out of Washington. Much of the discussion at the end of the conference focused on whether a federal foreign language czar would be a good thing (as envisioned

in the National Foreign Language Coordination Act, a bill proposed by Senator Akaka), or what the impact of the federal government's new-found interest in foreign language education might mean for institutions of higher education.

After the conference a group of UC Berkeley language lecturers met to discuss some of the issues raised and specific actions that the University of California generally, and foreign language departments at Berkeley in particular, could take that would have a positive impact on foreign language education in the academy. True to a "think globally, act locally" mentality, our concern is the specific actions that we feel are necessary at this time if institutions of higher education in general, and UC Berkeley in particular, are to meet their responsibility to produce an informed and educated citizenry.

This report, then, is a summary of the views of a half dozen lecturers on the current state of foreign language education in the public schools and at the university.

THE UNIVERSITY AND NATIONAL FOREIGN LANGUAGE POLICY: A LECTURERS' PERSPECTIVE

by Mark Kaiser, BLC Associate Director

At the Core –

An Understanding of Foreign Cultures

Beyond the security concerns, other factors speak to the societal need for a citizenry knowledgeable of foreign cultures and competent in foreign languages. The globalization of national economies, the opening of world markets, a more mobile work force, and instant inexpensive world-wide communication are significant social, economic, and political forces bringing cultures and languages into ever closer contact, sometimes, as the current case of the Danish cartoons demonstrates, with explosive results. Moreover, although English is the lingua franca of the new global economy, our global competitiveness will be seriously compromised if we rely on everyone else learning English. The American manager who has been instructed to outsource software development to the company's affiliate in Bombay would be well advised to know something of the cultural and business practices of Indian society. Even if Hindi was not the language our manager studied in school, she would have acquired essential skills – the sensitivity to cultural differences, a heightened awareness of the ways in which

cultural values are imbedded in language, and an appreciation of the difficulties faced in acquiring proficiency in a different linguistic system. These skills would greatly improve her ability to interact professionally and personally with her Indian colleagues. Most lecturers today see the teaching of culture (and Culture) so intermeshed with the teaching of language that it would be impossible to separate the two.

Foreign Languages and the Public High Schools

If we can assume that knowledge of a foreign language and culture (or languages and cultures) is a necessary attribute of an educated individual in today's society, the question then arises of how we might guarantee university graduates have that foreign language and foreign culture competence. When universities abandoned language requirements in the 1960s and 70s but retained foreign language entrance requirements, they transferred the responsibility for foreign language general education to the high schools, which, unfortunately, received no additional funding to implement such a program. Since high schools carry the burden of foreign language general education, it is instructive to consider for a moment the state of foreign languages in our public high schools, as seen from the perspective of Berkeley language lecturers. In California, for example, foreign languages are not considered part of the academic core, but rather fall into "enrichment" courses, with little support or status from the administration or parents. As enrichment courses, they, together with art and music, are the first to suffer from budget cuts and limited resources. Moreover, high school language faculty members often find strong resistance to homework or serious academic content ("This is my fun class!"). Nor are parents generally supportive of required language programs at the high school level, as was evidenced by the conference paper by Janis Jensen on the history of foreign language requirements in the state of New Jersey.

Many high school students will take just enough foreign language courses to meet the entrance requirements of the university (two years for the UC system), a requirement that many will meet by the time they finish their sophomore year

of high school (at age 15-16), and the choice of language will have been limited to French or Spanish, or maybe German or Latin. Moreover, data from placement into UC courses indicate that the old formula of equivalency (where one year of high school language is equivalent to one semester of college level language) is simply not valid: most high school students with three years of high school French / Spanish / German will place into the second semester at Berkeley, with a smaller number placing into the third semester and some into first semester, depending on level of achievement, how long the interval since taking the classes has been, etc. Nearly all students who take two years in high school place into first semester at the university. Clearly, the notion that students graduate from UC Berkeley with the knowledge and skills equivalent to one university year of a foreign language is an illusion, if we're relying on high schools to provide that level of education.

Foreign Language Requirements

There is no easy solution to this problem. Given the financial constraints and the current attitudes about foreign languages prevalent in public schools, it is improbable that they will be able to provide instruction in a broad spectrum of languages, especially when one takes into account the lack of certified teachers in the less commonly taught languages. On the other hand, reinstating language graduation requirements in terms of university courses would prove difficult, in particular for many students in engineering and the sciences, where requirements for the major are already heavy, with many students already taking longer than four years to finish a program. Moreover, most language instructors have ambivalent feelings about a general language requirement: on the one hand welcoming the students who would fill under-enrolled classes, thus solving the problem of insufficient student credit hours generated, but at the same time not really wanting to deal with large numbers of students who don't really want to be enrolled in the class. Similarly, language departments would be concerned about the impact of language requirements on their budgets, in particular the impact on upper division courses and majors if

resources were redirected to elementary and intermediate language courses.

A possible solution, one not without its own problems, would be to require a level of proficiency in a foreign language as a graduation requirement. Potentially the greatest benefit of such a policy would be the impact on the high school language curriculum, which would be made more accountable. Knowing that the university requires a level of proficiency and not just seat-time would bring pressure from parents and students for renewed rigor in the high school language program. At the same time, a college language requirement that could be met, at least in part, in the high school, would require very clear articulation between the high school and college curricula and better training and higher expectations of high school faculty. Verifying student achievement in language and culture by means of a testing program would be problematic, in particular in dealing with heritage speakers or students whose language background falls outside of formal schooling. It should be noted, however, that in the experience of Berkeley lecturers, high school students who take Advanced Placement (AP) courses in languages and subsequently take the AP test as a general rule place very highly at the college level and perform successfully in advanced college level courses. Thus, a rigorous academic program at the high school level is possible.

Other Forms of University Support

Short of instituting one kind or other of language requirement, the university can do more to encourage and promote language study. For example, could intermediate foreign language courses meet the American Cultures (AC) requirement? Although the current AC requirement focuses on racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity within the American experience, certainly foreign language courses, with their emphasis on intercultural communication and understanding the other, and the multiethnic, multiracial, and multilingual makeup of our target cultures, are concerned with the same issues that are at the core of AC courses, albeit not from an American perspective. Foreign language instruction has changed over the past several decades: whereas language instruction once emphasized

the linguistic system (grammar and translation), and then primarily was centered on communicative performance (reduced, ad absurdum, to ordering coffee or buying theater tickets), today we focus on intercultural communication and understanding the other, which provides students with new perspectives on American culture and the English language. A student who has studied the multiple layers of French culture, the regional, ethnic, religious, and socio-economic diversity of France, cannot help but look at U.S. culture in a new light.

Negative Impact of “Accountability”

The university needs to reexamine the ways it evaluates the efficiency of foreign language departments. Foreign language programs are being devalued by the methods used by the university to evaluate course loads, count credit hours, etc. Foreign language classes cannot be taught in classes of 700, and often less commonly taught languages have very small enrollments, especially beyond the first year. However, by using credit hours generated as the measure of a department's productivity, undue pressure is put on departments to increase enrollments by offering more courses in English and canceling under-enrolled language sections. So, for example, upper division courses that used to be taught in the language are now taught in English so as to attract a few English-only students into the class – at the expense of advanced language students, who no longer have the opportunity to take the course in the target language, thereby further improving their language skills. A similar problem affects Education Abroad Program (EAP) students. EAP is an essential part of a language major's education. Spending significant periods of time in the target culture using the target language is a sine qua non for acquiring higher levels of language proficiency. We should be doing everything we can to enable more students to participate in study abroad programs (one aspect of the Bush administration's National Security Language Initiative is a grant program to assist financially disadvantaged students with support for study abroad). Unfortunately, when a student enrolls in EAP, the department loses the credits that the student would have received had the student stayed on campus and enrolled

for courses. For those departments that are already concerned about low credit generation, this is a strong disincentive to having their students participate in EAP.

A bottom-line approach to foreign language education cannot help but impact quality. A language department that is forced to combine its second-, third-, and fourth-year courses into one class, as is the case with Finnish, is not offering advanced students the classes they need to master the language; language programs that need to rely on tutors to teach their languages, as is the case with most African languages, must often rely on native speakers who have little training in foreign language pedagogy and who fall outside the support structure offered to language lecturers and senate faculty.

Language Teaching and Foreign Language Departments

Foreign language departments need to reexamine their policies and procedures and verify that they are conducive to sound second language education. Language education at research universities is not of the first priority, yet it behooves departments to address the big questions: “What should an undergraduate major in language X know upon graduation? What should the student's performance levels be in the language? What should they know about the culture? What skills in working with texts should they have?” In addition to their goals, departments need to take into account the needs of their students. Students study language for a variety of reasons, including family heritage, personal growth, professional skills enhancement, for travel or business, etc. To what extent do our undergraduate language programs consider those needs when designing courses and curricula?

There are other structural issues that need to be addressed. The disconnect in departments between a tenure-line faculty teaching primarily graduate students in literature or linguistics and a non-tenured faculty teaching language can be palpable, from the courses taught, to the students chosen for admission to graduate school, to their teaching assignments. When language instruction is (mistakenly) viewed inside foreign language departments as a second-tier activity centered on mastery of grammatical forms,

lacking the intellectual weight of literary/cultural studies or theoretical linguistics, not only does language instruction suffer within the department, but foreign language instruction in the broader sense suffers at the university.

We are at a crossroads: we recognize the sorry state of foreign language competency in the U.S., we realize the importance of studying foreign languages and foreign cultures, but we are unable to make the fundamental changes in our educational institutions that would communicate to students that the study of foreign languages and foreign cultures is not only important, but a core component of one's education. Failure to do so, in a world that is becoming increasingly multilingual and multicultural, is to leave us isolated and disadvantaged.

The East-West Divide: Is Multatuli's *Max Havelaar* a Topical Novel Anno 2005?

by Inez Hollander, Lecturer, Dutch Studies

After more than 140 years of scholarship, Multatuli's *Max Havelaar* (1860) is considered one of the most acclaimed novels in Dutch literature. Critical of the colonial government in the Dutch East Indies, the Dutch cultivation system, and the corruption of the Javanese aristocracy, the novel was quickly embraced as the book “that killed colonialism.” The anti-colonial label has stuck even though there have been critics, Rob Nieuwenhuys foremost among them, who have contested the truthfulness of the work.

When reading the novel more closely there are apparent contradictions (or what Jacques Derrida has called *aporia*) in the text that reveal both colonial and anti-colonial reflexes. Using Ian Buruma and Avisha Margalit's *Occidentalism: The West in the Eyes of its Enemies* (2004) as one of the theoretical frameworks for my analysis, I have tried to show that the novel is in fact both anti-colonial and imperialist, both anti-Western (Occidental) and pro-Western (Orientalist) in its orientation. As such, Multatuli's *Max Havelaar* is not so much a prophetic novel but an apt reflection of the East-West divide, which lies at the root of the multicultural and immigration crisis in The Netherlands today.

Last September I took over as Academic Coordinator from my colleague from the Department of Near Eastern Studies, Sonia S'hiri. Two events she had organized for the fall semester were very well received: language instructors' responses to Michael Geisler's talk, "Metaphors to Die for: Towards a Rhetoric of National Symbols" [Speakers: Mark Kaiser (BLC), Sonia S'hiri (Arabic), Karen Møller (Scandinavian), Dayton Henderson (German)], and the Panel Discussion on "Grammar and Politics in the Language Classroom" [Moderator: Sonia S'hiri (Arabic), Speakers: Hatem Bazian (Arabic), Yoko Hasegawa (Japanese), Sam Mchombo (African Languages), Jaleh Pirnazar (Persian), Sarah Roberts (French)]. Thank you, Sonia!

Our language instructors (helped by the Area Studies Centers, which covered their registration costs) formed a large contingent at the UC Consortium's National Colloquium on U.S. Language Educational Policy (October 21-22, 2005). The following week, a number of us met to discuss issues that had been raised at the conference.

At the beginning of the semester, I sent out a questionnaire to all of the lecturers, held a general meeting, hosted a luncheon for language program coordinators – and was gratified by the number of respondents/attendees. Once again, I was struck by the number and variety of language classes being taught on campus (from a small Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian class with three literary standards and multiple levels of proficiency to an overflowing beginning Chinese class for the heritage speakers of dialects other than Mandarin) and the different pedagogical challenges resulting from this. I was also impressed by the level of commitment (in time and energy) on the part of our lecturers.

Given the number of hours spent in the classroom, office hours, and departmental meetings – not to mention preparation and grading – finding a time when everyone can meet is not easy. Partly for this reason, we decided to experiment with a new format: small, shared-interest groups, each headed by a lecturer. Our first group began meeting last semester under the leadership of Anna Livia Brawn (French). They have begun gath-

ering information on translation courses being taught on campus and gauging support and interest in setting up a minor or major in translation studies. They plan to discuss what type of translation can and should be taught in the lower division and for what purpose (a bridge between language and literature, vocabulary-building exercise, comparative linguistics, contrastive grammar). Nikolaus Euba (German) has proposed a second group to start meeting this spring. He plans to discuss the theory and practice of student portfolios in an attempt to find ways to connect the language and literature/culture programs within foreign language departments. The focus will be on designing a concept that goes beyond the mostly evaluative purposes of the European model and institutes portfolios as a central site for students' self-reflection.

In the fall, at a special orientation to bSpace, the new campus online collaborative learning environment, the language lecturers talked about the importance of having non-Latin alphabets available within the Web site.

We have two workshops scheduled for this spring: on March 10, Elizabeth Bernhardt (Stanford University) will discuss reading in a foreign language, and on April 28, Steve Thorne and Scott Payne (Penn State) will speak on "Data-driven approaches to Second Language Assessment, Pedagogy, Research."

Finally, we are all looking forward to a new monthly reading group and potluck supper, hosted by Claire Kramersch. This semester we will be revisiting the concept of communicative competence (in anticipation of the discussion to be published in this summer's issue of the *Modern Language Journal*), with the first session dedicated to Dell Hyme's classic article, "On Communicative Competence."

I look forward to seeing everyone at these and other events.

ATTENTION

LANGUAGE LECTURERS

The BLC deadline for new online materials

for fall semester 2006 is

APRIL 15, 2006

Contact Marianne Garner at mgarner@berkeley.edu, 642-0767 ext 24, about acquiring language learning materials for your fall classes.

If you would like to schedule the use of Berkeley Language Center facilities for the fall semester, contact Victoria K. Williams at victoria@berkeley.edu, 642-0767 ext 19.

LECTURER REPORT

Michael Geisler, Dean of the Language Schools and Schools Abroad and Professor in Linguistics and Languages at Middlebury College, kicked off the BLC's fall lecture series on September 23, 2005, with a talk entitled Metaphors to Die For: Towards a Rhetoric of National Symbols. Dayton Henderson was one of three respondents. The others were Mark Kaiser, BLC Associate Director, Sonia S'hiri, BLC Academic Coordinator, and Karen Møller, Lecturer in the Department of Scandinavian. To hear the talk and the all the responses, please visit: http://blc.berkeley.edu/lectures_past.html

A Response to Michael Geisler's Talk by Dayton Henderson, Ph.D. Candidate, German Department

After reading Michael Geisler's Introduction to *National Symbols, Fractured Identities*, I immediately attempted to reconcile his theories of signification and identification with recent approaches to language teaching. I had to ask myself, What role does any of this have in the language classroom? Even more to the point: What function can national symbols have in the German-speaking classroom? For some time, the common textbook focus on communicative competence has emphasized the student's ability to navigate the native culture through the acquisition and use of "meaningful" language. One of the consequences of this can be seen in the index of a popular undergraduate textbook. Under the heading Culture, items such as clothing size, job search, and leisure, are present. No mention of flags or national hymns is made. Discussions of German holidays are restricted to Christmas, New Year's, and, surprisingly, Valentine's Day. October 3, the Day of German Unity, is similarly left out. If the publishers of this particular textbook are to be believed, national symbols are not important for the language classroom.

I quickly recalled, however, a moment three weeks ago as a fellow teacher approached me after a particularly challenging lesson about the Euro. Apparently, the *Bundesadler* found on the back of the German coinage was confused for a similar symbol commonly used by the National Socialists. The students were perplexed, and the instructor opted to abandon her lesson plan and explore this issue further. What resulted was more than a simple reassurance that there was no fascist agenda behind the common European currency. It was an extended discussion in which the students interacted with their own assumptions about Germany while exploring important discursive constellations connecting various German histories with their present reality. This was, for me, the epitome of "meaningful" language use.

The circulation of national symbols is wide, and variations in their apprehension are always evident. Geisler posits that German national symbols are especially problematic. They are additionally inflected by a disconnect stemming from a historically ambiguous sense of nation and state. The ostensibly subsequent alienation of large portions of the German population undermines the effectiveness of its national symbols and accentuates potential confusion in their reception, even within Germany.

What is even more interesting for the American German instructor is how this confusion is accentuated by a second, socio-geographic, dislocation. These conflicted symbols are simply not invested with the same meanings for our students as they are for Germans. Moreover, they must compete with a divide that is usually only bridged by the media deluge of unproblematic brands like Volkswagen and Becks, for example. For the most part, these students aren't aware that there is a third verse to the German

National hymn. They probably do not know the intricacies of the German Democratic Republic's absorption into the Federal Republic, or the long history of the anachronistic Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation. Most likely, however, they can identify the difference between a Porsche and BMW, and, when questioned, they often offer mundane examples such as these as "true" national symbols.

Yet, as can be seen in an extensive classroom discussion about the Euro, national symbols are (obviously) projected beyond state borders. Some resonance of the inflected, problematic signifier must make itself felt. This is exactly why they are important within the classroom. The language instructor can exploit the spaces of the disconnects, where gaps in understanding occur, and search out these areas where meaning might still reside. By discussing these areas, the students themselves take part in erecting a bridge that overcomes the spaces of cultural misunderstanding. It is not solely up to the teachers; textbooks can do better as well. The development of materials as exemplified by Jörg Roche's advanced-level textbook *Für und Widersprüche* shows that it is not necessary to limit cultural or political discussions to "Dining Practices in Baden Baden." In short, the ambiguity of an uncertain symbol should not be cause for its avoidance in the syllabus. It should be used to foster effective and interesting discourse. Within such a framework, the use of national symbols in language-based activities can be extremely fruitful, and consistent with the goals of the modern communicative classroom.

Why teach or learn German in 2005? Articulating the German Language Program at Berkeley

by *Nikolaus Euba, Lecturer and Language Program Coordinator, German Department*

The socio-political, economic, and cultural changes that have taken place in Germany since reunification as well as the recently strained political relationship between Germany and the United States call for a continuous re-examination of the goals of German language programs in North America. What does it mean to be teaching or learning German as a foreign language in the United States? What are we teaching for, which discourse community are we preparing our students to communicate with, and to what extent is it our role to raise the historical and political consciousness of language students? Attempting to find answers to these questions, my BLC fellowship provided a unique opportunity to investigate the role of the language program within UC Berkeley's German Department and helped me to gain significant insights into the expectations of students, Graduate Student Instructors (GSIs), and faculty alike. Following up on the major implications of this project will contribute to a better articulation of the German language program and ultimately help to increase retention rates as well as enrollments.

Building on earlier studies that focused on students' motivations to start and continue their study of German, the main component of the project was a survey of 11 faculty members and 18 GSIs. The returns indicate that a student exiting from the four-course language sequence is expected to be proficient in the language to a limited degree, with an emphasis on receptive skills (mostly reading, but also the ability to comprehend lectures in German) and on the mastery of basic grammatical structures in writing and speaking. About half of the respondents expect some knowledge and reflection about language, not only of a more traditional linguistic (grammatical)

nature, but also along the lines of "what words do to people and what people do to words," with an ability to explain links between language and culture. This reflects earlier findings which show a significant number of students requesting more grammar instruction, indicating that knowledge about the way language works in the sense of linguistic and sociolinguistic information is seen as just as important and interesting to our learners as skills development or other content.

Forty-six percent of the respondents emphasized the importance of well prepared, enthusiastic, and convincing instructors who instill in students a love of the language and nurture it from the beginning level on. This is echoed by student surveys showing instructor enthusiasm and the fun learners have in their language courses as the biggest influence on their decision to major in German. This has practical consequences for the professional development of GSIs which oftentimes focuses mainly on effective teaching methods, techniques, and classroom management; a constant awareness of the power of individual motivations, experiences, and instructor enthusiasm must be raised, and strategies need to be identified to let these insights effectively infuse classroom instruction.

While almost all respondents expect significant factual knowledge from graduating majors, ranging from literary, philosophical, and cultural history to the linguistic "building blocks of modern German," only 20% think that it should be the role of the language program to equip students with this kind of knowledge or even prepare them for it. This makes transparent the disconnect present in so many foreign language departments between lower division language courses and upper division culture and literature courses. Even though the recent professional discourse provides models that attempt to address this question by advocating a coupling of genre and tasks across the curriculum (Byrnes 2001), such models are not easily transferable to other institutional contexts. This is true especially when, as confirmed by my survey, the departmental philosophy

in teaching and research emphasizes interdisciplinarity, diversity, and student autonomy, and encourages students to take significant responsibility in tailoring their own courses of study.

Nevertheless, greater coherence and transparency can and should be achieved. Language course goals and expected learner's outcomes need to be clearly articulated for each course at each level within a consistent paradigm of what students are expected and will be able to do with their language skills. While such a paradigm might be oriented towards the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) proficiency guidelines, the National Standards, or the Common European Framework of References for Languages, survey results indicate that aspects of reflexivity and sociolinguistic awareness need to be accounted for, as well. But beyond this, if a program's mission should be, as one respondent put it, to "stimulate curiosity and teach students how to work independently rather than representing ourselves as a knowledge bank," the students themselves need to be engaged in collecting and managing information over the course of their study towards a comprehensive documentation of their progress. To achieve this, we are planning to introduce a carefully designed portfolio, not primarily aimed at assessment, which would engage learners in self-reflective practice from the very beginning on; raise their awareness of horizontal, vertical, and interdisciplinary articulation; and let them better perceive their own progress as well as their individual learning styles and strategies (Woody 2005). The information contained in such a portfolio could serve as a basis for interacting with faculty and advisors who can get an overview of a student's prior accomplishments, goals, and language profile, and use the portfolio to more effectively address individual needs and desires in coursework and advising. By implementing this portfolio concept, we are building on the positive experiences with our second-year writing portfolio model as well as addressing our own and others' research findings that show that

students' perception of good progress and a good degree of fluency in a foreign language is an important motivating factor (Sinka and Zachau 2005).

It remains to be seen if such an approach may ultimately help to better bridge the gap between the upper-division content courses and the language program. But it seems to provide a promising point of departure for a continuous discussion about program articulation issues which will regularly bring to the table all parties involved – students, GSIs, faculty – to share practices and visions that create and foster the kind of community future students will want to join.

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Making Culture in Place: The creation of an online Korean-English forum to discuss the offline linguistic landscape

by David Malinowski,
Ph.D. Candidate,
Graduate School of Education

My project this semester was to design, create, and implement a prototype online bilingual environment to enable students of Korean at UC Berkeley and students of English at Suwon University in Korea to explore each other's languages and cultures as they are written into everyday landscapes of shop signs, billboards, and other language-in-place. A Web site, entitled "Culture in Place" (*Munhwa ui Sageori* or "Intersections of Culture") was launched in November 2005 for a two-week period of use by students in Korean language classes at Berkeley and elsewhere. The site is currently online at <http://blc-fellows.berkeley.edu>.

Conceived as an extra-credit activity to enrich language learning in the classroom through the affordances of online communication, this project had the following three goals:

1. To foster learners' abilities to read and discuss how linguistic, cultural, and social meanings are both indexed and created in multiple modes through the linguistic and other semiotic resources employed in material signage;

2. To develop learners' fluency in the target language (TL) as they interact with fluent speakers;

3. To create a context for motivation as language is linked to real places and activities in the TL.

The immediate desire to create a forum for learning language from signs arose from my own experiences as a language learner in Korea puzzling over the contradictions in, for example, a bilingual Korean-English sign along a landscaped walking path behind a shopping mall in Seoul. This sign urged me to "love the grass" in Korean while ordering me to "KEEP OFF" in English. Similarly, I recalled experiences as an English teacher for students who asked me, for instance, why drugs should be free in a city where street signs frequently identify an area as a "DRUG FREE ZONE."

These questions, in a sense natural outcomes of the application of classroom knowledge by language learners in environments where the TL appears in public, would seem to fit within a larger theoretical and practical concern for language teachers. Since the 1970s, the "environmental print" of signboards and cereal boxes has been shown to be an important resource in emergent L1 reading skills of children (see, for example, Goodman 1984; Aldridge, Kirkland, & Kuby 1996). More recently, attention in sociolinguistics has come to focus on the "linguistic landscape," defined by Landry & Bourhis (1997) as "the language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings [within] a given territory, region, or urban agglomeration." Linguistic landscape studies from the perspective of language learners who are, were, or will be in environments, increasingly common worldwide, where the TL is readily apparent in spaces of public activity suggest that the language of signs constitutes an oft-used resource for second language learners (Gorter & Cenoz 2004). Further, language learners and 'native speakers' looking at the same multilingual signs often read from them different denotational and connotational meanings (Huebner 2004). Thus, as intersecting public and private discourses in multiple codes and mixed modes mark the landscape, forming complex contexts

for human activity, the consequences of knowing 'who you are' in relation to 'where you are' appear significant. Ben-Rafael et al. (2004), drawing on Bourdieu's notion of the "social field" that permeates the economy of symbolic exchange, assert, "representation in symbolic reality may constitute a power resource in itself." This claim, coupled with the premise of Ochs and Schieffelin and others in *Language Socialization* that all linguistic exchanges – written as well as spoken – are sites where momentary stances are taken and lasting identities formed, suggests that studying the linguistic landscape might serve the larger interests of the foreign language class.

An online discussion forum, through which distant learners of two languages would view and discuss signs from each other's environments, seemed to be an ideal venue. Through the juxtaposition of language becoming familiar with still unknown visual contexts of use, I hoped that learners could explore a critical 'third place' (Kramsch 1993, Cortazzi & Jin 1999, Chun & Plass 2000) of social categories and identity formation that might not reveal itself through other means. While aware of the potential for miscommunication and lack of learner motivation possible in computer-mediated collaborative FL learning projects (Warschauer 2000, Ware & Kramsch 2005), I was optimistic that the two-way process of interpreting external and 'authentic' objects (i.e., learners would focus on interpreting instances of their target language as it appears in public and not directly address each other's beliefs and private affairs) and the equal distribution of expertise required for interpretation (an equal number of signs in the Seoul/Suwon areas and Berkeley/Oakland areas would appear on the site) would result in a compelling and relatively safe context for interaction.

This goal proved rather simplistic and difficult to realize in one semester. Korean instructors from the first through fourth year classes at Berkeley (K1, K10, K100, K101) had graciously allowed me to approach their students to ask for volunteers, and participants from K1 and K10 were to receive extra credit for posting their questions and responses, in English or Korean, in the forum. Arranging for participation by students

of English in Korea was more difficult. A colleague and English instructor at Suwon University had agreed to recruit volunteers from her beginning to intermediate writing and conversation classes, but was unable to do so until the Web site, in development throughout most of the semester, was online and ready to support participation in two languages. By the end of the project's first phase in December, 83 participants had registered on the "Culture in Place" online forum. Approximately 50 of these were students in the first and second year Korean classes – precisely those levels that were to receive extra credit – while only two were from Suwon University.

Designing and implementing the Web site itself, in both its functional and technological aspects, thus constituted the major hurdles to be overcome and, accordingly, the major goals achieved over the course of the project. At the core of the site was to be a bilingual forum with discussion topics tied to thematically or geographically linked groups of images of signs. Given constraints in time, resources, and my own fledgling knowledge of Web design, the free, multilingual, open-source bulletin board package offered by phpBB (www.phpbb.com) was chosen, modified to include Flash image slideshows, and accessed via an embedded Google map (using the Google Maps API download available at www.google.com/apis/maps).

This environment was intended to facilitate both teacher and learner-initiated inquiry into the meaning of the language and other semiotic resources employed in signage. Pending further site development, this means that teachers in coming semesters should be able to tailor discussion questions and activities around self-selected clusters of signs in order to augment specific curricular goals, and in accordance with class themes. Examples might include becoming familiar with the geography of the country or region where the target language is spoken by learning to read place names in street signs; analyzing the language of directives and forms of address in regulatory signage; and comparing the use of metaphors or visual icons in outdoor advertising campaigns. Toward the end of the fall 2005 semester, when "Culture in Place" finally went online, participating

teachers at Berkeley indicated that they wanted to see what kinds of discussion emerged from students' brief exposure to the new environment, before deciding on future use. Creation of the discussion forums and corresponding questions was thus left mainly up to me, with assistance from my colleague in Suwon.

As of the end of Berkeley's fall semester in December, there were 54 discussion threads containing a total of 230 individual posts (comments, questions, etc.) spread over 14 different clusters of sign images. Of these 54 threads, only 11 were in Korean, and each thread averaged only one response, indicating that English was overwhelmingly the language of preference on the site – not a surprise given which classes the participants came from, but a disappointment nonetheless. In addition to paying attention to which language students chose as their medium of communication, I was interested in gauging how much initiative students took in posting their own questions. Among the 54 threads, representing individual discussion topics about a given group of signs, 16 were started by 10 different students; three students emailed me or directly uploaded their own photographs of signage in the target language; five provided URLs of other Web sites that illustrated their points. Many others indicated through references to the comments of others that they were engaged in a multiparty dialog and not just posting in order to post. (In classes giving extra credit, students posted the 10 required times within a period of 20 minutes, indicating that they were just 'getting the assignment done.')

When considering the content posted on "Culture in Place" in light of these facts, I believe the success of this and similar language learning Web sites will rely on judicious encouragement and moderation by a team of instructors proficient in the students' native and target languages, and closer coordination of online activity with in-class learning objectives. Indeed, the Korean instructors at Berkeley have agreed to collaborate in integrating the "Culture in Place" Web site further into sections of their respective curricula as an extra-credit learning activity in the spring 2006 semester.

At the same time, I believe the creation of a bilingual, self-sustaining online

Georgian Verbs and How to Use Them: An Online Reference

by Olga Gurevich, Ph.D. Candidate,
Linguistics Department

Georgian is a less commonly studied language, currently offered at only a handful of American universities including UC Berkeley. It is the official language of the Republic of Georgia and has about four million native speakers. Georgian has a unique alphabet and a written literary tradition extending back to the fifth century AD. Georgian grammar is complex and unusual and presents significant difficulties for the learner. However, Georgian is very interesting from a linguistic point of view, and is becoming geo-politically important as well.

Perhaps the most complicated part of Georgian grammar is the verbs, in particular the number of somewhat regular and irregular patterns in verbal conjugations. Currently available dictionaries, grammars, and textbooks often provide only partial information about verb formation, and finding verb-specific information in the textual sources can be challenging. My BLC project involved the creation of an online reference tool for Georgian verbs, to be used by language learners in conjunction with classroom instruction or self-study. Its main purpose is to provide learners with easily accessible information about verb formation and use, presented in a way that would facilitate learning.

I will present a few of the reasons why Georgian may be difficult to learn. Georgian verbs are characterized by a large number of morphological elements (a verb form can contain as many as 14 different elements), and the meanings of individual elements cannot be determined in isolation. Rather, each inflectional pattern involves a combination of several morphological elements in various positions of the verb form. For example, verbal agreement (simultaneously with the subject and object of a verb) involves a combination of prefixes and suffixes.

Tense formation presents two kinds of problems. First, each verb requires one of about 10 preverbs and/or 1 of about 8 thematic suffixes to form certain tenses; a learner must memorize which preverb and suffix go with each verb. In addition,

community will require greater flexibility for students to upload their own geo-referenced image content, assemble their own clusters of thematically linked signs, and, importantly, learn more about their counterparts' real world linguistic, geographic, and personal identities. In this semester's discussions of the meaning of the Oakland restaurant name *Sahn Maru*, Berkeley students revealed their varying (or absent) knowledge of the denotations and connotations of the words *Sahn* (mountain), *Maru* (floor), and the compound *Sahn Maru* (a "peaceful spot just below the peak of a mountain," in the words of the restaurant's owner). The medium of the shop sign or street sign, with its particular font, colors, and use of image, elicited discussions about prototypically 'Korean' or 'American' mountains, as well as narratives of the learners' own experiences with these places and identities. Among these, the user "bayside," in response to the mostly English discussion about the term *Sahn Maru*, remarked, "*Na ege 'Sahn Maru' raneun mal eun heun hi sseuneun gueo imyeonseodo eoneu ddae e neun gamjeong i iip toeneun shieo gateun neukkim eul junda... Eoril ddae abeoji reul ddara sahnmaru e ollatteon saenggak do nago, himdeun shijeol sahnmaru e olla sahm eul bichuobodeon il do saenggak nanda.* (For me, while 'Sahn Maru' is an everyday expression, sometimes when I hear it it also makes me feel as if I'm listening to a poem...It reminds me of when I climbed with my dad up into the mountains, and of other difficult times when I went up to the mountains to reflect on life...)"

I look forward to the future development of the Web site and further investigation of ways to join classroom spaces of learning to these and other places of life through the linguistic landscape.

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Table 1: Variability in tense formation

	'Bring,' stem <i>igh</i>	'Paint,' stem <i>xat</i> '	'Eat,' stem <i>ch</i> '
Present	<i>igh-eb-s</i>	<i>xat'-av-s</i>	<i>ch'-am-s</i>
Future	<i>c'amo-ighebs</i>	da-xat'avs	she-ch'ams
Aorist, 3Sg Subject	<i>c'amoigh-o</i>	<i>daxat'-a</i>	<i>shech'am-a</i>
Perfect	<i>c'amough-ia</i>	<i>dauxat'-avs</i>	<i>sheuch'am-ia</i>

the endings used in certain tenses are different for different types of verbs. The table above demonstrates some of this variability.

Essentially, Georgian verbs can be divided into several lexical classes, similar to inflectional classes in Russian or Spanish. However, such divisions have not been made systematically in Georgian grammars, probably because the number of such classes would be quite large (Melikishvili describes 63). Thus, a simple numbering of classes, as is done in other languages, would not work for Georgian. The only sensible way to learn the various patterns is by learning frequent verbs that belong to each class, and identifying new verbs with those frequent examples.

Web site Design

The online reference is meant as an addition to classroom instruction or self-study using a textbook, such as Kurt-sikidze (forthcoming). The Web site is divided into four sections: Verb Conjugation, Examples, Exercises, and Resources.

Verb conjugation tables are accessible through browsing by individual verb (in Georgian or in English), or by searching for any conjugated verb form. This search capacity demonstrates a major advantage of the online medium over print and is especially valuable for a language like Georgian where each verb has many inflected forms, and where the relationship between an inflected verb form and a dictionary form is not always transparent.

For each verb in the database, several types of information are displayed. In addition to all of the conjugated forms (organized by tense), there is a list of other verbs that conjugate the same way,

thus reinforcing the idea of example-based verb classes.

Many of the verb forms are accompanied by handpicked examples of usage from print sources (mainly online newspapers and chat rooms), audio (from recorded naturalistic dialogues), and movie clips. These are complete sentences and short paragraphs; translations are available for all examples. Audio and video examples additionally come with transcriptions. I am very grateful to Vakhtang Chikovani for finding and translating the examples. The real-life examples give learners a context in which to remember the particular verb forms, making both morphological structure and semantic nuances easier to remember.

The Examples section of the Web site provides a different way to access the same examples, through browsing by verb or by searching. The Exercises section contains several different types of exercises to provide additional practice for using and conjugating verbs. Many of the exercises are based on the conjugated forms or the handpicked examples, and the correctness of the answers can be checked automatically. The Resources section contains links to online and bibliographical resources about Georgian.

The verb conjugation database is produced using a computational model developed in my dissertation. It is implemented as a set of finite-state transducers (Beesley & Karttunen 2003) and is described in more detail in my 2006 paper. Its output was imported into a MySQL database and displayed on the Web site using PHP. The Web site itself was designed using DreamWeaver.

The Web site will be operational in early spring 2006 at <http://blc-fellows.berkeley.edu/georgian/>.

Conclusion

The use of technologies in language learning can ease the process of finding grammatical information, particularly in a language with complex word-formation patterns. It can also provide more real-life examples than the classroom alone, serve as a study tool, and make learning more individualized.

Contextualized learning is designed to simulate the linguistic input received by a native speaker, including information about relative frequencies of individual words, word forms, and constructions. This is currently missing from our online reference because frequency information is not yet available for Georgian. It is my hope, however, that an online collection of example texts can serve as the basis for the creation of a corpus of spoken and written Georgian, annotated and translated. Such a corpus can then be used for statistical calculations and for increasing the number of authentic texts in the teaching of Georgian.

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2005-06 CALENDAR

B L C L E C T U R E S

Friday, February 17

AT THE INTERSECTION OF
INTERNET-MEDIATED
FOREIGN LANGUAGE
EDUCATION AND LEARNER
CORPUS ANALYSIS

Julie Belz

Assistant Professor of Applied
Linguistics & German
Department of Linguistics and
Applied Language Studies
Pennsylvania State University

3-5 pm, 370 Dwinelle Hall

Friday, February 24

LINGUISTIC HUMAN RIGHTS
- SOME RECENT DEBATES:
INTELLECTUAL GAMES
VERSUS RESPECT

Tove Skutnabb-Kangas

Professor Emerita
Department of Languages and
Culture, Roskilde University
Department of Education,
Åbo Akademi University, Vasa

4-6 pm, 370 Dwinelle Hall

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Friday, March 10

FOREIGN LANGUAGES SUR-
VIVING AND THRIVING IN
CONVENTIONAL UNIVERSITY
SETTINGS

Elizabeth Bernhardt

Professor of German & Director,
Stanford Language Center
Stanford University

4-6 pm, 370 Dwinelle Hall

Friday, April 28

CORPUS LINGUISTICS AND
LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT:
RESEARCH, ASSESSMENT, AND
PEDAGOGICAL INNOVATION

Steven Thorne

Assistant Professor
Department of Linguistics and
Applied Language Studies

Scott Payne

Assistant Director for Technology
and Research
Center for Language Acquisition
Pennsylvania State University

4-6 pm, 370 Dwinelle Hall

Friday, May 12

INSTRUCTIONAL DEVELOP-
MENT RESEARCH PROJECTS

BLC Fellows

3-5 pm, 370 Dwinelle Hall

C O N F E R E N C E S

March 23-25, 2006

*DigitalStream 8th Annual Confer-
ence: Literacy in Language Learn-
ing with Technology.*

California State University,
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[http://wlc.csumb.edu/digital-
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June 17-20, 2006

*The Joint Conference of AAAL and
ACLA/CAAL*

Montreal, Quebec

[http://www.aaal.org/aaal2006/index.
htm](http://www.aaal.org/aaal2006/index.htm)

November 11-12, 2006

*Foreign Language Association of
Northern California (FLANC)*

University of California, Berkeley
Berkeley, CA

<http://www.fla-nc.org>

November 16-19, 2006

*ACTFL 2006 40th Annual
Meeting & Exposition*

Nashville, TN

<http://www.actfl.org>

December 27-30, 2006

*The 122nd Annual Modern
Language Association of America
(MLA) Conference*

Philadelphia, PA

[http://www.aaal.org/aaal2006/index.
htm](http://www.aaal.org/aaal2006/index.htm)

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

The mission of the 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 also provides audio-video-computerized lesson materials, listening, viewing, recording, duplicating and archiving facilities and related technical and administrative services.

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

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