



*Published by the
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*Submissions for the
fall 2008 Newsletter are
due by*

May 22, 2008

*See <http://blc.berkeley.edu/Newsletter.html>
for guidelines.*

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A Conversation with Elana Shohamy

by Lisa Little, Academic Coordinator, Berkeley Language Center

LL: I wanted to start the interview by saying how lucky we've been to have you here at Berkeley all this time, and that we hope you come back. My first question is a general one: What should be the role of assessment in the foreign language classroom. Should we be assessing our students, and if so, how often and in what ways?

ES: In a perfect world we wouldn't need assessment at all because we assess informally all the time. I think there's no need for assessment as such, but since it is a part of teaching, and culture, and politics, we should try to do it in the best way we can, in terms of very informal, but very good, feedback. While feedback is probably the most important thing, assessment should not be limited to feedback alone. We have to think about diagnosis, repair, and reassessment. We also have to make the process more egalitarian so that students can assess teachers, too. Assessment has to be brought up not as a one-sided kind of thing, but more as an interactive process, a dialogue. What we see a lot of now is dynamic assessment, which means that assessment and teaching are integrated and not separated in the way they used to be. To a large extent this is a result of studies that I was a part of that looked at the wash-back effect of tests. What we are finding out is that tests are doing harm in that they are bringing about a situation in which students are only studying for the test, they're being judged solely on how well they do on the test, and they are being graded on only one performance. All these studies have brought us to the conclusion that tests are actually not very good. I'm speaking mostly about external tests or end-of-semester tests. They narrow the curriculum and learning. What should we do about it? Now that this is documented and the harm of tests is known, we're looking for different approaches.

LL: How do we do that?

ES: With a kind of mutual assessment or with the kinds of tasks—teaching tasks—that get evaluated in different ways, and with process assessment which is not one-time—you revise and do it other ways—and with multiple assessment like portfolios, self-assessment, and projects. I think at universities and other places they are still using tests, but less and less so, I would say.

LL: So in some ways you're actually saying that in the real world, since we do need grades, we should almost be doing more rather than less assessment.

ES: Right, integrated assessment. If teaching, learning, and assessment are combined, assessment shouldn't be a separate thing. This is how we should assess in the classroom, I would say. Externally, we have no choice, although I see many school systems that, after things like No Child Left Behind, now want some air, some oxygen. They want to get away from testing, so they remove testing as a formal thing altogether.

LL: Then how do you come up with the grades at the end of the semester?

ES: That's really the problem. But I think continuous assessment is a very different approach. First of all, everything that you do in class that you want to count gets counted and this is why the portfolio, even as a metaphor, is so good. It's not that everything gets counted, but everything that you want to count gets counted. You don't want bad things that you've done to be included, although some people say that actually the real test is to do a bad talk or whatever and improve on that and that that's a truer assessment. The idea is to have a portfolio whereby lots of procedures and lots of behaviors, so to speak, are included over time

and with feedback. And of course not just your teacher assesses you because sometimes your teacher is looking for certain things and noticing errors while your peers are saying, “No, that was a great presentation; it was funny, it was good.” Or even self-assessment, in that respect. I’m sure it’s happened to you when you’ve given a talk and have had people not think it was great while you’ve thought it was quite good. For some reason it just didn’t come across. And the opposite situation, where you think it didn’t go well and others thought it did, is also true. So I think if we adopt a more fluid and more open approach where everything can count, it’s okay. In terms of the grades, I’ve argued with the administration at Tel Aviv University. For example, we have to give an MA test at the end for students who are not doing a thesis. We argued against the test, and for multiple assessments, and we won and were able to do it. The administration doesn’t necessarily want a test; it wants a grade. In terms of how to get to the grade, I think teachers have lots of freedom.

LL: From what you are saying, it sounds like you are grading partly on effort, partly on improvement, and also partly on different points of view. And of course, the one thing that we don’t seem to ever bring in is the people to whom this is addressed, the people in that country or countries where this language or varieties of this language are being spoken. Somehow, they’re never part of that assessment process. I’ve always wanted them be part of it in some way, but I don’t know how one would actually do that.

ES: Good point. Just send a file of presentations, a video presentation to . . .

LL: . . . a class and have them rate it or something like that. . .

ES: Yeah, yeah. That’s a nice idea and I really like it in terms of communicating, and nowadays it’s so easy.

LL: And everything that we’re talking about here is probably going to make it a little bit easier for them all to make that A, right?

ES: It’s not that multiple assessments make it easier necessarily. On the contrary, you might think that it was basically okay, they used specific structures, and they are fine. The people in the country, on the other hand, may be interested in other things: we know that native speakers don’t even see those grammatical errors at all; they’re

only listening to content. So the multiple audiences you are talking about, which I really like, would be very good as one more criteria. But the question we have to ask, of course, is criteria for whom? I think what we often ignore is that not every language production is done for the same purpose. Of course, to become a lecturer in Estonia, at Talinn University, that’s one thing, but to talk to friends in a bar, that’s another thing, to impress them with your foreign accent may be another thing . . .

LL: That does seem like the problem. At the university, what are we teaching language for? I have students in my Russian class who come there for all kinds of reasons, and many of them are graduate students. So what do we teach in the class? We have to assess what we’re teaching, and they have to be connected, but it really comes down to what we should teach when we all have different reasons for being there?

ES: Yeah. So I think the whole idea of teaching foreign languages is problematic in the sense that it’s a thing detached from reality because you don’t know what you’re using it for. That’s why I’m so much for content-based instruction, content-based learning, because I think the content should be primary and the language itself should be secondary. This is why I’m pushing, more when it comes to English, these fusions and hybrids that you’ve heard me talk about. That’s something I’m pushing to have happen from a very early age, even with first-grade students in Israel where, instead of just teaching them English, we integrate English into the classroom. Say it’s math, for example. We can do math in Hebrew, math in English, math in Arabic. The whole idea is to put math first and show that you can do math in all kinds of languages.

LL: How would that look at the university? I can see in elementary education how that would work.

ES: Universities are very problematic in the sense that everything is organized by discipline. But what we see at Georgetown with Heidi Byrnes, I mean a lot of it is content-based. And you see it a lot in business schools and places like that where the goals are very defined.

LL: It’s easier in something like a business school or law where you have, say, a language for business, a language for law, and you basically know what you’re teaching it for, right? I

think some of Heidi Byrnes’s content-based curriculum is wonderful, but you do wonder then, for instance, why it isn’t better to have that content taught by a specialist in the primary language of that university, probably at a more sophisticated level.

ES: The way universities are structured, it’s very difficult because here we have different subjects and then we have language. I think language, when it’s integrated with content, needs a different infrastructure of key teachers. I’m surprised that even in thinking about Berkeley, there’s not one course that’s taught here via another language. All foreign languages are taught as “this is a foreign language.” We never see a content being taught via another language, in other words, with the language as the medium of instruction.

LL: Perhaps some literature courses within language departments.

ES: Versus what people are talking about now . . . the multilingual university. In Europe it’s becoming a big thing. Sometimes all they mean is “let’s do some courses in English,” but it’s changing a lot. I know in Basque country, every course you can take is offered in two languages, in Basque and in Castilian. I think it requires a very different way of doing things from the way we are doing them now.

LL: Although English, since it is a global language, has become the medium for a lot of things in other countries. . .

ES: English is not a good example. . .

LL: What would it be in this country, for instance? How would we choose the language?

ES: Oh, Spanish—there is no question! But you could do it with other languages as well. I think if you have enough students who are interested and you have this combination. . . It means, though, that people from other departments need to be willing to come to the foreign language departments. Often it’s like separate territories, but it could be very nice if the professor of history meets with you and you teach a course together.

LL: That is being done to some extent in some places.

ES: Yeah, I know, and I think this is a very good direction.

LL: Right. Now let’s say in your language department you decide to teach a content course, I

and let's say not business, which is pretty common, such as Russian for Business or German for Business, but let's say you're teaching more of a Heidi Byrnes kind of course, how do you choose the content?

ES: In terms of what areas? I think Georgetown is an interesting example. It's easier to choose content there because the university is... I mean it's very much about politics and history.

LL: Students there do have a certain agenda... A lot of students have similar interests.

ES: Sure, that makes it easier there. In my view, from teaching here one semester, I think people who come to Berkeley are very unique. They're more open, radical, and interested in change, so I think you would build on this kind of background in terms of content. I don't want to generalize the Berkeley student but find some kind of orientation that this university stands for. You see it a lot in high schools now. For example, you see high schools that are more arts-oriented or more science-oriented. As we speak, in Israel, in the School of Education, we bring high school students to the university. (Again, the example is English, unfortunately; I'm trying to push so it will be in Arabic as well.) The students take five different areas, medicine, astronomy, biology, and so on. Everything is being done in English for a period of two weeks and they live in the dormitories and they speak, like a 24-hour thing, in English. They're in tenth grade or so but eventually they want to become experts in these areas, so they choose the area. I think kids who are 18 or 19, they know. I don't think that part should be too difficult.

LL: Although, again, at the university level, our Russian students, for example, often have different interests.

ES: But it doesn't have to be the whole course. It can be sub-sections of the course, like the course I taught here in which we had one kind of larger course, a plenary, and then we had another hour during which students were divided into sub-sections according to the areas that they are specializing in ...

LL: ... based on the students' interests...

ES: ...you could combine! Again, it's very difficult. Universities are so inflexible. But I'm impressed being at Berkeley, in that I see lots of crossovers, relatively speaking. So you

have a course in education, in law, and philosophy and they get together. Remember Claire told us she was teaching with another group a few years ago?

LL: Right, language ecology.

ES: So these are topics that are fantastic. And language is part of the ecology—think about that! One of my problems with language teaching, and this is why I have problems with testing, is that it focuses on the 'how' rather than on the 'what.' For me, it's a much broader issue because I really resent the situation where let's say immigrants, and I'm very interested in this work, are being judged by how they speak the language. Right away our ear is so tuned to 'yes, he's from here' or he's not. It brings up this whole thing of otherness and who's in charge and majority vs. minority and the question that I always hate: "So how long have you been here?" Or the comment, "Your English is very good." Right away it constructs some people as having the right to be here and other people as being the others. I wish we could somehow shut down our ability to hear accents, but since we can't do that, one of the things I'm trying to do is undo this discrimination towards foreign accents, to make people less sensitive to and less concerned about accents. This is very difficult, especially for language teachers of my generation for whom language correctness has always been so important. But it's the very thing that we as language teachers pay attention to that later in life becomes this identifier of otherness because this kind of language correctness is still in people's minds. In immigration situations they look at you and pay attention to that kind of marker. I don't know if I'm coming across...

LL: No, it makes sense. I understand, but it's true generally, right, that you judge people on education as well, and when people are at a university, there's a certain type of educated speaker even of the native language that's assumed or judged. Which varieties of second, third, or fourth language should we be teaching?

ES: We rarely teach street language, but this is one of the things I'm trying to push a lot in Israel, because in Israel, all Israelis speak what we call Hebrish, which sometimes has an accent. We have a group of American students coming, and I want them to learn Hebrish. I want them to learn what they view as bad language, but that I view as how we speak!

LL: Rather than pretending it doesn't exist, teach them the version that is actually more native, so to speak.

ES: Exactly! The local variety.

LL: Can you think of any tests that are widely given in foreign language instruction that you think are good?

ES: Hmm, I can't think of something specific as a test because by definition I don't buy formal tests... But I remember one, for example, when students come to the teachers and say, "OK, test me on this," or "This is what I know how to do; this is what I don't know how to do." This is why the idea of a portfolio is very nice in the sense that it's a kind of independent study but also a contract, an agreement about language learning involving negotiation between the students and the teacher. But I cannot think of any tests. The OPI and the ALTE, the Common European framework— they are all very limiting in terms of the kind of things we talk about, because they don't talk about ideas, they don't talk about hybridities, they don't talk about concepts. It's all about language per se or they choose these artificial topics. Basically I don't buy these kinds of things at all.

LL: Artificiality is something I wanted to talk about. How can we avoid the artificiality of most tests?

ES: I think classrooms are artificial to begin with. But within this artificiality of classrooms, there's so much we can do. It's all relative—task-based tests are better than the old tests with questions that we had.

LL: But a lot of it is negotiation, in your view, between the students and the teacher.

ES: Yeah, I think it should be. And especially at the university where we get people who are already from so many different backgrounds and know so much, people who have been abroad and those who haven't. Given the limitations, I would say portfolios are the best. I really strongly believe in portfolios.

LL: Because the student has some say in the learning process and because it can be...

ES: ... good for reflection and good for all kinds of samples. Because it allows this kind of dynamic assessment at the end of the process of negotiating the portfolio, when you discuss it. There are so many possi-

bilities, especially in groups. By the way, I strongly believe in group testing, even with my students at the university.

LL: What would that look like, group testing?

ES: Like a few students working together and doing presentations in the classroom and all that put together. I really believe that nothing in language learning should be done by one individual per se.

LL: How do you make sure that one person in the group doesn't do most of the work?

ES: I don't mind that. First of all, you'll always have a situation where somebody will do more than the others. You know how life is. And when you have students who don't do any work, others will tell you. If somebody slips, so what? We were just having this conversation with one of the teachers here and she was saying that she's sure that a student had written something and then had her boyfriend rewrite it before she turned it in. I'm saying, "Okay. So what?" Don't I, when I write something, have somebody go over it and edit for me and we discuss it? The question is whether or not the student can discuss the ideas with the teacher, even without the boyfriend being around. I wouldn't even be against bringing him to a kind of interview. We used to do tests like this. We did an alternative assessment for immigrant kids where the parents come to the testing situation, too.

LL: And what did that do?

ES: It got the parents involved in the whole experience, in the assessment experience. For example, the student would show his or her portfolio and the parents would be there, and not just as external judges, because we taught them how to participate by giving their views, listening, and hearing more about their children. We ended up this assessment conference by giving the student a list of things he or she had to do by the next assessment because it's all dynamic. And the parents were there knowing what's happening and why the student got this contract. They were there during the assessment discussion, the assessment conference, so they were part of the learning in a way.

LL: What age were these students?

ES: These were high school students. It's not always easy. I don't want to simplify it.

LL: And how did you assign grades?

ES: I think we had grades from A to D. We encouraged students to bring in more things, not necessarily things that were taught in the classroom.

LL: So they put a lot of work into this.

ES: Oh, yeah, lots!

LL: Did the grade tend to depend mostly on how much work they had put into it or would it depend on the quality and partly how they justified what they had put in there?

ES: Exactly. They had to explain what this had to do with the goals of the course. I wouldn't say that it wasn't impressive if they brought in lots of things. Of course, the variety was one of the criteria, but it certainly wasn't the only thing. It's a whole process: you collect a lot throughout the whole semester, you have this assessment conference, and then give the diagnostic 'recipe' for what you're supposed to do for next time. And the grades were... I can't say they all got A's, but you have good rubrics of what counts and what doesn't count. Rubrics should also be planned with students. One of the things I do at Tel Aviv University, and not just in language classes is, at the first class of the semester, I always discuss grading with the students. It's not solely up to me to dictate. I show them the goals of the course, we talk about objectives, and I ask them how they want the grade to be distributed.

LL: Do they also get to take part in deciding what the goals of the course should be?

ES: Yeah, we've done that. Yeah, the student-centered curriculum. We've done that many times, especially in seminars.

LL: So the students are really involved all they way through, and they've helped determine the assessment.

ES: The thing that I think is important is to create the rubrics, goals, and assessment procedures at the beginning of the semester with the students. Now how they get to perform, that's up to them. Some of the students may think that it's actually good to have weekly quizzes on new vocabulary. They may decide that, too.

LL: How much should the student's knowledge when he or she enters the class affect the assessment at the end? How much should the assessment depend on improvement? Because you know, again, in history here nobody asks

if you know anything about Russian history when you enter the class, right? You're all going to take the same test at the end and nobody asked if you knew anything before. Whereas in language we place the students, we test them, we say it's not fair if they already know something. Should that be a factor—what they bring, their background knowledge?

ES: I would say improvement is very important. No question about it. But it's very difficult in a class to really measure that. This whole issue of beginner, intermediate, advanced is so problematic. As if when we talk to one another we all have to have the same proficiency in order to communicate. I mean I'm a native speaker of Hebrew but I can talk to people who are not native speakers or are very beginners and still have a very nice conversation. So I would very much like to see—probably what I'm saying is pretty radical—I'd like to see language classes built in a very different way, not necessarily according to proficiency because that approach tends to legitimize and perpetuate this idea that only language correctness counts. On the other hand, I don't want to teach an advanced course in language policy when students are there who know nothing. But with a minimum level of language we can allow much more variance, much more diversity in classes. And I think it's also better practice for future ways of speaking the language.

LL: Then the content becomes the crucial part, and if you can get it across. Your language capability may be less than somebody else's but you may be better at actually getting this content across.

ES: And then you'll constantly have to practice with negotiation. You have to negotiate meaning and share information. You have to ask, "How do you say that?" It allows more group dynamics in the classroom. I'm reminded of a study on teaching first grade in English. While everybody assumed that a teacher using English in first grade must know it really well, we showed that teachers whose language proficiency was low, who hardly knew any English but who were interested in first-grade math, found ways to get to the English. They used the dictionary, they brought people in, they constructed a situation with the students in a very nice way so both groups were learners and managed to do very well. You don't need a lot of language in first grade, and you need less than we think. I think the situation now where there's a big rebellion against native

speakers suggests that within a few years, native speakers will be marginalized.

LL: ...in English?

ES: ...in any language. The non-natives should be as legitimate as others. I think English has paved the way for lots of changes, lots of innovations. It legitimized a non-native variety.

LL: You would like to see us in all our language classrooms, say at the university here, use that as an example to try to change our language classes in some ways?

ES: I think it's understandable how other languages, even Spanish, are so behind. We had this session at AAAL about Spanglish as a legitimate language. There were still people who were against it. Spanish is the next one to go through the same revolution I think.

LL: But does all of this in some way mean that language classrooms as we have them today, language departments, don't really have a place at the university?

ES: I think they have a place, but a different one. They have to change. I think the BLC here has changed lots of things—the critical aspect. I come here and am so impressed. I've never seen a language program like this, that asks so many questions, that is so critical, so politically critical, and so very interested not just in language per se but in things that are taking place in other cultures, as part of language learning. I think this intellectual part is unique.

LL: As the final question, let's say we gave you a Hebrew class to teach here at Berkeley, first year, what are you going to do, how are you going to teach it?

ES: Good question. First of all, I'm a big believer in visuals and language in the public space. I don't believe language should be only texts, and so one of the things I've really been thinking a lot about is how to incorporate linguistic landscape into language teaching and assessment. For example, we have a group of American students coming to Israel every year to do an MA in TESOL at the university. They don't know a word of Hebrew and they only speak English to one another, but they live in Israel now, so they're exposed to Hebrew in the public space all the time because everywhere they see signs, instructions, and announcements. We decided last year to have them take pictures of the public space that we

could then discuss in class without touching a text, and without focusing on a lot of grammar and vocabulary. What can you get, for example, just from the shape of the sign or from where it was located? Where in the space could you find it? What do you think it would have said in your own language? What do you think it means? Then, beyond using these kinds of things for making meaning, making sense of the country, of the area, of the space, we always consider it from a social, political perspective. Okay, even the fact that it's written in only one language, only in Hebrew, and you know it says "Danger." How come it's not written in Arabic? Or Russian? How come all the cosmetics are in Russian? What does that make you think about this society? So you can use this kind of linguistic landscape to construct the place where you are and to gain the kind of thing that Claire would talk about, more critical, symbolic kinds of values.

LL: And these are the things you can do from day one.

ES: And you don't need a textbook or anything.

LL: How would you assess performance after having done that?

ES: In the same way. And I don't think there's a problem with asking questions in English, either. If we're talking about multilingualism in the classroom, and if we don't separate language from content, I think we should allow this means of negotiation or doing testing in a number of languages in assessment as well. So, back to your question, I would start my first Hebrew class at Berkeley with visuals, with the space, the public space, before I even go into texts. It depends on the context, of course, but you can be in Russia or in France so easily today. Just think about Google Earth where you can see neighborhoods, you can see signs. This kind of technology allows students to bring the environment to class.

LL: And then the assessment would follow that? The assessment would be based on what they had done, and would be similar, and would be negotiated ...

ES: Or you give them another sign: "What do you think it says? What do you think it means?" You can little by little put in words; that's another way of doing it.

LL: That's a good concrete example of how you would take some of the ideas that we've talked

about and what you would do if you were teaching a first-year class which has always seemed like one of the hardest things to do, right? OK, well thank you very much!

ES: Thank you! It was great.

Thanks to Lisa Little for editing her questions and Sarah Roberts for editing the interview. —Editor

Did you know that...?

by *Richard Kern, Director, BLC*

Chinese writing is sometimes done with numerals? In computer-mediated environments like instant messaging and chat rooms, where there is a premium on quick responses, Arabic numerals are often used to approximate sounds of Chinese syllables or words. Writing on a computer in Chinese normally involves typing in either a radical or a pinyin (roman alphabet phonetic) version, and then selecting the appropriate character from a drop-down table. Because this takes time, Chinese chatters commonly use numerals to signify roughly similar sounding words (or at least a similar leading consonant) to maintain a brisk pace of communication. For example, 282 [èr bā èr] is commonly used to represent 饿不饿 [è bù è] 'are you hungry?' One could reply by writing 246 [èr sì liù], used to approximate [è sǐ le] 饿死了 'starving to death' and then sign off with 88 [bā bā], sounding like 'bye bye'. 7456 [qī sì wǔ liù] sounds like [qī sǐ wǒ le] 'I'm angry to die' and 995 [jiǔ jiǔ wǔ] sounds like [jiù jiù wǒ] 'Help me!' Take special note if someone writes you 520. In Chinese, it sounds enough like 'wǒ ài nǐ' 我爱你 to pass for 'I love you'. You could respond with 775885 for 'kiss me, hug me', but beware: if your correspondent thinks you are being fresh, you might be told 748 ('go to hell'). Chinese blogs show that there are dozens, perhaps hundreds, of numerical transliterations of Chinese expressions like these. And now they have migrated from the computer to the sound stage. Mavis, a Taiwanese pop star, put numerical sweet nothings to music in her hit "Digitally Falling in Love." One number you will not often see in Chinese chat, however, is 64—shorthand for 'June 4' (the day of the Tiananmen Square killings in 1989). Apparently, filters are in place in Chinese chat rooms to screen out reference to sensitive subjects, and '64' is automatically nixed.

News from the Education Abroad Program

by *Jan Kieling, Administrative Director, Berkeley Programs for Study Abroad*

Michael O'Connell, Interim Director

Following the recent retirement of Director John Marcum, Michael O'Connell, Professor of English at UC Santa Barbara, has been appointed Interim University-wide Director of the University of California Education Abroad Program.

Enrollments

In the current 2007-08 year, some 4,500 UC students will be studying abroad through EAP. Although these are predominately undergraduates, EAP is making efforts to increase participation of graduate and professional students. The majority of EAP students are enrolled in formal course work at EAP partner institutions; however, nearly 350 students also participated in out-of-classroom, research, and internship opportunities last year. Reciprocally, 1,300 students from partner institutions abroad will be in our UC campus classes and labs for periods ranging from one UC term to the full year. These students from abroad enrich our academic lives; at the same time, they get a taste of what UC has to offer.

EAP Undergraduate Research Awards

EAP offers undergraduate research awards annually in each of three disciplinary areas: the humanities, social sciences, and sciences and engineering. Each award consists of a \$1,000 stipend. The purpose of these awards is to recognize undergraduate students who have distinguished themselves through their excellence in research conducted while abroad on EAP, and to encourage other students to become involved in research efforts abroad. These awards also recognize UC's initiatives to internationalize the undergraduate educational experience and promote undergraduate research activities.

Information and applications can be found at <http://eap.ucop.edu/eap/discipline/researchawards/>

New EAP Programs

The University-wide Committee on International Education has approved the following recently developed programs:

Berlin European Studies Program, Free University, Germany—fall and spring semesters

Economics and Business Program, Fudan University, Shanghai—spring semester

Introductory Spanish Language and Culture, UC Center Madrid—summer session

Joint Program on Contemporary Japanese Culture, International Christian University, Tokyo—fall semester

Language and Areas Studies Program, Hanoi University of Foreign Studies, Hanoi—fall semester

Imperial College, University of London—year-long immersion program specifically for engineering and geosciences majors

Introductory French Language and Culture, UC Center Paris—summer session

A French Perspective on American Academic Culture

by *Nicolas Guichon, University of Lyon 2*

Last October, thanks to the France-Berkeley Fund, I was one of four researchers (along with Christine Develotte, Samira Drissi, and Caroline Vincent) from the ICAR (Interactions, Corpora, Learning, and Representations) Research Laboratory of the University of Lyon 2 to go to UC Berkeley to take part in a three-day seminar organized by Rick Kern.

The seminar, entitled *Rethinking Language Teaching in the Digital Age: French and American Perspectives on Technology and Pedagogy*, had two objectives. The first was to improve the pedagogical and technical organization of an ongoing online teaching project that allows Berkeley French 3 students enrolled in Désirée Pries's class to meet with Lyon tutors for weekly online sessions. The second purpose of this visit was to study this type of setting from different perspectives (SLA, semiotics, education) and assess its potential for language learning.

Although we had already built a common culture thanks to frequent email exchanges and Skype conversations prior to this visit, we enjoyed spending time together at Dwinelle Hall, exchanging impressions of the pedagogical experiment, sharing ideas and references and devising methodologies to investigate the different phenomena linked to online language learning. The pleasure of meeting was complete when, at the end of three intense days, we discovered zinfandel in Berkeley's great restaurants with our American hosts.

This seminar also gave us the opportunity to experience a different academic culture from the French one. There were two specific elements during this seminar that struck me as quite un-French.

First, everybody's input (including that of undergraduate students and doctoral students) to the scientific exchanges was encouraged, welcomed, and actively taken into account. In a similar French setting, undergraduate students would simply not be invited and PhD students would barely feel authorized to utter even a few words. I once heard a famous French researcher

mumble, quite audibly, after a doctoral student had intervened at the end of a conference: *"De quel droit elle parle celle-là?!... elle ferait mieux de finir sa thèse."* (Who gave her permission to speak? She'd be better off finishing her dissertation.) This is quite revealing as to who can say what, and when, in the French university hierarchy.

Second, interactions between researchers were fluid and totally uncompetitive. This supportive atmosphere made it possible to express ideas, even if they were sometimes confused or the "right" words were missing. There was the feeling, which is quite exhilarating for a French researcher, that taking risks in front of others by openly exploring new and sometimes ill-defined concepts was better than just capitalizing on well-defined notions. In France, researchers tend to allow themselves to exchange with their peers only once they have written several articles on a given subject (as well as having demonstrated that other specialists are not as good as they are).

Three days were not sufficient to discover if there is an academic climate that is specific to UC Berkeley and I do not have David Lodge's talent for comparing the old and new worlds' academic cultures, but I do know now that these bi-cultural seminars provide excellent opportunities to identify good research practices and to bring them back to France.

Notes from the Director

by *Richard Kern*

Greetings and best wishes for this new semester and new year! The United Nations General Assembly has declared 2008 the INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF LANGUAGES (IYL) in an effort to promote unity in diversity and global understanding. Drawing attention to the world's shrinking linguistic resources, Koichiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO, writes: "within the space of a few generations, more than 50 percent of the 7,000 languages spoken in the world may disappear. Less than a quarter of those languages are currently used in schools and in cyberspace, and most are used only sporadically. Thousands of languages—though mastered by those populations for whom it is the daily means of expression—are absent from education systems, the media, publishing, and the public domain in general." UNESCO thereby urges governments and organizations to develop language policies that promote multilingualism. How? By enabling linguistic communities to use the mother tongue "as widely and as often as possible" (including in educational contexts) while also learning and using a national or regional language as well as one or two international languages. This is obviously hugely important, and even if nothing else comes of this International Year of Languages, if the physical punishment or shaming of children for speaking their mother tongue in schools can be eliminated it will represent an immense step forward for humanity.

Languages, however, have some competition this year, even within the United Nations, which has also proclaimed 2008 to be the International Year of Planet Earth, the International Year of the Potato, and the International Year of Sanitation.

Additionally, international environmental groups have named 2008 the Year of the Reef and the Year of the Frog. Will languages get lost in the mix? Indeed, reading the official UN press release gives one the impression that most of the real thrust of IYL is on internal UN policies having to do with multilingualism in the organization's daily activities. There is precious little guidance on what people should do outside the UN.

David Crystal, in a paper given at the Centre UNESCO de Catalunya last September,

sees it as a potential advantage that languages are thrown into the hat with the planet, the potato, and sanitation. After all, he says, humans need a viable environment, food, and drinkable water to exist. But to co-exist they need language, and linguistic diversity is essential to the intellectual and emotional health of the planet: “Without exposure to the alternative visions of the world expressed by other languages, our view of ourselves and of our planet remains inward-looking, unchallenged, and parochial.”

To a campus already well steeped in ecological approaches to language, such ideas are so familiar as to be taken for granted. Indeed, the problem with language itself is that it's like the air we breathe—we don't pay much attention to it until there's a problem with it. But the real point of any kind of “International Year of...” is consciousness raising—to make us think about things we don't ordinarily think about much, to lend visibility to what routine has made invisible. As language teachers, we have a leg up on most people—it's our job to think about language on a daily basis and we're good at raising others' consciousness about language. So, in the spirit of 2008 International Year of Languages, I propose a New Year's resolution: to think and talk about language and languages with as many people as you can—your students, colleagues, family, friends, and acquaintances. Let them know why it's important to know multiple languages. Let them know about ACTFL's National Student Video Podcast Contest to celebrate the value of language learning (details at www.ACTFLVideoContest.org; deadline February 15). Let them know that many languages are endangered and why that matters. Let them know what is happening in our own backyard with California Indian language revitalization efforts, such as the Language is Life Conference (April 4-6 in Marin) and the Breath of Life Workshop held here at Berkeley (June 8-15). Let them know why linguistic diversity benefits everyone.

To stimulate your own thinking, the BLC will provide a great lineup in its Spring Lecture Series. In February, Jay Lemke will speak about affective dimensions of language-in-use and language learning. In March, Deborah Anderson will talk about language preservation efforts through digital encoding of written scripts. In April, Patricia Baquedano-López will talk about language socialization processes, and in May the BLC

Fellows will present their language research projects.

We will also continue our reading groups for Lecturers. Claire Kramersch will host an evening reading group and potluck at her house and I will host a daytime reading group in B-37 Dwinelle, with lunch provided by the BLC. Dates will be announced soon. All language lecturers are invited to attend one or both reading groups!

Have you thought about presenting a teaching innovation at FLANC or other 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 1, 2008, for travel through August 1, 2008.

Thank you all for your continued interest and support. I look forward to seeing you at our spring 2008 events.

Carpe annum!

http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL_ID=35559&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2007/ga10592.doc.htm>

Available at http://www.crystalreference.com/DC_articles/Langdeath20.pdf

Notes from the Associate Director

by Mark Kaiser

I often reflect on a story that Claire Kramersch has told about the student of French who, in French, was opposed to the death penalty, but who, in English, was for it. Initially, this struck me as preposterous. Surely, I thought, our core values are immutable and we only use language to express those beliefs. On further reflection, however, I came to realize just how influential the discourse community that I was steeped in at any particular period in my life had been to creating my identity. If learning a language does involve a layering of new identity, as language instructors we should encourage our students to be reflecting on this aspect of language learning.

David Divita explored this very point in his BLC Fellowship in the fall of 2006. As he reported in his newsletter article, <http://blc.berkeley.edu/newsletterF2006.pdf>, “Through a regular engagement with the self as constructed and performed in a foreign language, students hone their skills of self-assessment.” Further, he suggests various reflexive activities that would function to “expand students' awareness of the possibilities of self-invention through language.”

In addition to the activities cited by David, another way instructors might consider encouraging their students to reflect more deeply is by having them become involved on the BLC's blog site, Found In Translation (<http://foundintranslation.berkeley.edu/>). It is worth noting that the category of “Language and Identity” is the most frequently used, and the second most common is “Language and Culture.” Many of the postings are very thought provoking, (e.g., the most recent on “Linguistic Assumptions and Expectations” by Usree Bhattacharya) and would certainly encourage reflection by our students.

Please consider using Found In Translation in your courses this semester. Please contact me if you any questions on how you might use the blog. Best wishes for a successful semester.

When MERLOT is not a wine: Technology in Language Learning and Teaching, a Report on Recent Conferences

by Françoise Sorgen-Goldschmidt,
Senior Lecturer Emerita, French

Starting with the inevitable cliché, technology and its applications to language learning and teaching evolve at breakneck speed. As language instructors, we have an important responsibility to stay current, and constantly reassess and reflect on what we will use to best serve our pedagogical purposes. Technology and Language Learning Conferences are both exciting and overwhelming to attend. One may at times feel dizzy from the constant barrage of new words and concepts with names such as delicious—or rather *del.icio.us*—Flickr, mashup, Twitter, aggregation, Drupal, learning objects, not to mention the ubiquitous Web 2.0, and references to Web 3.0. These and many more relentlessly resounded throughout the sessions at the International Association for Language Learning Technology (IALLT) conference at Tufts, the SouthWest Association for Language Learning Technology (SWALLT) conference at Stanford, and the Globalization and Localization in Computer Assisted Language Learning (GLoCALL) conference in Vietnam, a joint conference of the Pacific Association for Computer Assisted Language Learning (PacCAL) and the Asia Pacific Association for Computer Assisted Language Learning (APACALL).

Retrospective Presentations

Retrospective presentations are very helpful for taking stock of the fast-paced (r)evolution from pre-Web 1.0 to Web 3.0.

At GLoCALL, Don Hinkelman from Sapporo Gakuin University included in his paper, “Wireless Notebooks in Project-based Learning, an Institutional Case Study,” a clear and useful background review of the evolution of the profession from Second Language Instruction (SLI) to Second Language Acquisition (SLA) to Second Language Socialization (SLS).

At SWALLT, Mimi Yu and Yoshie Kadowaki from the University of Nevada at Reno, retraced the last twenty years in a

cogent and lively manner (“Web 2.0 and its Impact on Language Teaching and Learning”), following an introductory statement about “Too much info! Too many tools!” Their conference notes and PowerPoint file including photographs of the different tools can be retrieved from <http://unrnhongo.pbwiki.com/SWALLT+2007+Fall+Conference+at+Stanford>: a succinct and lively summary for anyone, no matter how much they already know on the subject.

Recurring Topics, Tools, Technologies, and Themes

It is clearly impossible to review in detail all twelve days of pre-conference workshops, plenaries, and parallel sessions from IALLT, SWALLT, and GLoCALL. In addition, only at SWALLT was it possible to attend all presentations: with no parallel sessions, presenters and attendees spent the two days together in Stanford’s Digital Lab, a rare and wonderful occurrence when compared to usual conference formats.

Here are some of the recurring tools, technologies, topics, and underlying themes. Most of these were discussed in more than one presentation.

“Social Networking” and Web 2.0

As Vered Shemtov from Stanford University brilliantly demonstrated at SWALLT, we no longer just utilize information from the Web; we share information, create and interact there, and become part of online communities. Technologies allow everyone not merely to hear and watch what others have posted, but also to publish on the Web for the world to see.

In his links for the Pomona faculty <http://frc.pomona.edu/faculty/links>, Felix Kronenberg lists close to thirty “Social Software/Web 2.0 Resources.”

In that Web 2.0 context, the “from” in the title of Iain Davey’s (Doshisha University) paper at GLoCALL on “Multimedia resources from the Internet: Practical ideas and solutions,” had a quaint 20-century flavor to it, which did not prevent his presentation from being thorough and engaging.

UGC, UCC, LGC within Computer Mediated Communication (CMC): User Generated Content, User Created Content, Learner Generated Content: these self-explanatory concepts describe how learn-

ers and instructors will create their own content and not just use what exists.

“Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants”

Mimi Yu and others developed this issue that was originally raised in Marc Prensky’s 2001 article. Digital Natives are the N-gen (net generation) or D-gen (digital generation), i.e., the people that have grown up with digital technology, for whom communication on the Web is as important and normal as real face-to-face interaction. In contrast, Digital Immigrants are their serious, plodding, slow-learning, pre digital-age instructors.

Wikis. Everyone is familiar with the most famous one—Wikipedia. A wiki is software that allows users to create, edit, and link Web pages, thus allowing collaborative work on line. For a two-minute video (YouTube) presentation of how to easily create a wiki, one can visit <http://swallt.pbwiki.com/FrontPage>.

Vered Shemtov from Stanford illustrated how she first teaches her students how to create content for the Web, until they eventually contribute to Wikipedia in Hebrew, e.g., guiding visitors through the Stanford campus. Students do not just use and consult the Web for authentic language and culture resources; they become a part of the Hebrew writing community, and create in the target language for a worldwide audience.

Blogs (Web logs) and Vlogs (Video blogs)

Blogs lend themselves well to collaborative projects since anyone can read (or listen or watch in the case of vlogs) as well as contribute. Contributions are organized chronologically, and typically will not be edited by others (unlike wikis). Several speakers pointed out that with an enlarged readership or audience that may include native speakers, students’ sense of responsibility towards their productions tends to increase, and they are more engaged in their work.

Podcasts. A podcast, also called “The People’s Radio” by Andy Affleck in a 2005 TidBITS article <http://db.tidbits.com/article/7986>, is a series of audio or video clips that one can subscribe to for free. More importantly in the context of Web 2.0, students can also create their own podcasts. Alan Bessette from Poole Gakuin University in Japan demonstrated how he guides his ESL students in producing their

own interviews and radio podcasts, and how the prospect of a “real audience” adds to the challenge.

Disruptive technologies (Moodle, Skype)

A Wikipedia article describes “a disruptive technology or disruptive innovation” as “a technological innovation, product, or service that eventually overturns the existing dominant technology or status quo product in the market.” Will Moodle or Sakai completely replace commercial Course Management Systems (CMS) such as Blackboard or WebCT? Will Voice-over IP (VoIP), most notoriously Skype, eventually replace the telephone as CDs replaced LPs?

Moodle

Moodle was much in evidence (presented, discussed, or used) at all the conferences, especially at GLoCALL, where Moodle expert Thomas Robb from Kyoto Sangyo University was one of the organizers. Moodle is a free Open Source online CMS—or Learning Management Systems (LMS), or Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)—designed to help educators create online courses with opportunities for rich interaction. It is more widely used than Sakai, which powers bSpace here at Berkeley.

Skype, Skypecasting, and Skype Recording
Skype allows us to talk to people all over the world via the Internet for free. Skypecasts allow us to start or join a conversation. Conversations can be recorded and sent as podcasts.

Tags and Folksonomy (or collaborative tagging)

A Wikipedia article describes a tag (metadata) as “a (relevant) keyword or term associated with or assigned to a piece of information (a picture, a geographic map, a blog entry, a video clip, etc.), thus describing the item and enabling keyword-based classification and search of information.” The use of tags has become an important tool for finding and retrieving information on the Internet. Here again, metadata can be generated by anyone, i.e., language learners and not only the “experts” officially in charge of teaching them.

Andrew Ross from Brown University discussed ways of “developing a common taxonomy of description for these [learning] objects, and producing together a standard framework for their creation, archiving, and cataloging that includes both formal metadata and folksonomies.”

Let me now venture a summary based on the various presentations I attended: Collaboration seemed to be the main feature of the new paradigm that new technologies bring about.

In spite of the enthusiasm that prevailed throughout the conferences, most people involved with CALL know that Web 1.0, 2.0, or 3.0 will not be a panacea or miracle solution for language learners and their teachers, any more than the tape recorder proved to be decades ago. What problems and issues do these innovations bring with them? Some have been discussed since the beginnings of CALL and still are, while new ones have appeared.

Issues

“The pedagogy must drive technology, not the other way around” is an old saw that bears repeating. As Nina Garrett from Yale University suggested in her paper at IALLT, “Perennial questions about the relationship of CALL to ongoing pedagogical issues are sometimes ignored in the excitement of bringing new technologies to support learning activities we could not address before.”

In her IALLT presentation “Even The Best Tools Need A Pedagogy—Shaping the Foreign Language Learning of the Future,” Stephanie Kufner from Bard College stressed the need for intralingual and intracultural literacy, and used the five C’s of the National Standards as a framework for her ABC of Technology (What Tool to Use and Why) posted at <http://inside.bard.edu/cflc/FLLTProjects/IALLTBOSTON%202007/>

Overabundance of riches (Or again: “Too much info! Too many tools!”)

Already in the Web 1.0 era, we needed to learn how to make choices from the overwhelming array of easily accessible authentic multimedia materials on the Internet. Now that posting has been added to accessing, the choices are even wider. Media Literacy was discussed in the new context of Web 2.0.

Privacy

Joseph Kautz, our SWALLT Conference host at Stanford, expressed fear as to how free tools give too much power to Google and other corporate entities that can gather immense amounts of information on us.

His misgivings gave rise to very lively discussions.

Second Life, Facebook, and other social networks or virtual games

The discussion as to their pedagogical worth is sure to continue, but privacy may also be an issue. Barbara Sawhill from Oberlin College, the President of IALLT, raised the question of how much students want instructors and other “digital immigrants” in their “private” (though in fact public) spaces.

Assessment

A small number of the presentations I attended addressed the issue of how to assess the new types of student productions, e.g., wikis or podcasts, that Web 2.0 technologies have made possible. Fortunately, the abstracts from the upcoming CALICO with IALLT Conference (Bridging CALL Communities <http://calico.org/conference/>) seem to indicate that this issue will be addressed in several of the papers.

Conclusion

I look forward to again being overwhelmed by presentations at upcoming conferences taking place at nearby locations: San Francisco will host the first CALICO with IALLT conference (Bridging CALL Communities <https://calico.org/conference/>), Monterey will host the tenth annual Digital Stream Conference (<http://wlc.csumb.edu/digitalstream/2008/>), and Santa Barbara the fourth UC Language Consortium Conference on SLA Theoretical and Pedagogical Perspectives (<http://ucclt.ucdavis.edu/Events/index.cfm>). They are sure to generate excitement while also raising further questions. See you there!

As for MERLOT not being a wine? It is a Multimedia Educational Resource for Learning and Online Teaching (<http://www.merlot.org/merlot/index.htm>). Cheers!

World Views on World Languages

Towards a Multilingual Society? Current Issues in Language(s) Learning and Teaching in Germany

by Nikolaus Euba, Lecturer and Language Program Coordinator, German

Upon surveying recent publications, convention topics, and conference proceedings, current issues in foreign language teaching and learning in Germany present themselves as a rather open list in which it is oftentimes difficult to identify the explicitly new. In the aftermath of the introduction of the Common European Framework of References with the subsequent modification, re-design, and re-labeling of curricula and materials, it seems as if the once heated discussion about constructivist theories of learning and their relevance, applicability, and methodological potential has come to an end. The focus has shifted from mental processes of language learning to emotional and affective aspects of people and language, taking into account the more immediate needs of an increasingly globalized, multicultural, and multilingual society, and necessitated by changes in migration patterns and immigration laws as well as by the almost unlimited mobility of people and goods within the European Union member states.

This is paralleled by a conceptual expansion and a shift in terminology: added to the traditional distinction between ‘first’ and ‘second’ are the concepts of ‘third’ or ‘multiple’ language teaching and learning, and at the same time more specific and differentiated language learning goals are being articulated, even farther removed from the native-speaker yardstick of the seventies and eighties. Methodologically, the concept of multilingualism is accompanied by an intercultural interpretation of language learning which includes a pragmatic dimension, attention to culturally specific and non-verbal patterns of behavior, and an open, non-prescriptive interpretation of culture.

Concerning the subsequent need for new instructional materials which adequately reflect this changed philosophy, much progress and innovation seems to come from the field of *DaF* (*Deutsch als Fremdsprache*,

German as a Foreign Language), a subject not officially taught in German schools and hence not subject to regulations and budgetary restrictions from the cultural ministries. In materials development as well as in curricular design, increasing attention is given to learner autonomy, to individual learning strategies, and to the question of how new media and technologies can be most effectively utilized for teaching and learning. Many scholars and practitioners advocate age-specific methodologies and curricula, which provide early access to foreign language learning, oftentimes before kindergarten age, and are no longer solely associated with institutional contexts such as schools and universities. It is truly encouraging to see that some of these ideas have quickly been implemented in public pre-school programs in several of the German states. Amidst a vivid public debate of educational goals, immigration policies, and questions of national identity, it almost seems possible that the visionary ideal of a multilingual, pan-European, and transnational citizen will indeed one day become reality.

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The question: What are the topics being discussed at the copy machine concerning L2-teaching at the University of Jyväskylä?

by Sirpa Tuomainen, Lecturer in Finnish, Scandinavian

(Sirpa is spending a year at her alma mater, the University of Jyväskylä, in Finland, and sends us these thoughts. –Editor)

When I approached my colleagues with the above question, each one looked at me quizzically. I quickly realized that the question was framed incorrectly—culturally speaking. In fact, when people here need to discuss issues, they set a lunch date or meet in the *virkestyshuone* (literally, a ‘refreshing room’). In our building, there’s a spacious *virkestyshuone* with a large table, refrigerator, coffee machine, nice dishes, houseplants, coffee, and tea. Those returning from a trip often bring goodies introduced with the appropriate greetings—the latest from Aruba (with “hello” in Papiamentu) and Budapest (with “good morning” in Hungarian).

So back to the topics discussed over pastries in the *virkestyshuone*: the big question is how Finland—a country that tends to take a perfectionist approach—will deal with its increasing number of immigrants. There has been a change in national employment policies because Finland is very concerned about the shortage of employees in certain sectors: in other words, the country needs immigrants. These immigrants come with families and all of them need to be educated. How can the Finnish educational system guarantee that the children will achieve a language level at which they can be educated in Finnish? What is the adequate level anyway? Who can be considered a ‘native speaker’? Which registers should be emphasized? In order to ease the students’ transitioning, there is native language support in many schools, but the variety of languages is reaching such numbers that this cannot be provided for all. Appropriate, clear, and easily approachable materials in Finnish are desperately needed. A colleague showed me the current junior high-level history and biology textbooks. The language is quite abstract, and the books offer no scaffolding to help the L2-learners’ receptive skills.

In addition to immigrants, increasing numbers foreign students are also flooding the quality, free-of-charge higher education system. Programs are offered in English, but if the professionals educated in Finland are to become productive members of Finnish society, they do need to learn to get by in the language of the country. Furthermore, if Finland educates students at no cost to them, the country cannot afford to lose them immediately upon graduation. Should a Finnish language exam be part of graduation requirements? How about academics? Graduates can survive fine in English in their workplace, but is that enough?

At the same time, the jobs of those teaching in academia are becoming increasingly bureaucratic. There's auditing and certification of quality, intricate negotiations for individualized pay for each new hire, and changes in graduation requirements. All this leaves very little time for research, which is what most of the university faculty would prefer to spend their time on. Sound familiar?

The department responsible for the training of future language teachers at the University of Jyväskylä is questioning the educational level of their students, graduates of one of the world's best high school systems. Finns always score extremely high on the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) tests. "If the incoming language majors could at least find the direct object!" lamented a colleague. Many students also seem to have a dismal knowledge of the literature and history of Finland. In some ways, the universities are getting what they have asked for: students straight from high school into 'the bakery' and out as quickly as possible.

In addition, teaching methodologies are being questioned. New approaches are needed as multiculturalism affects foreign language teaching as well, especially that of English, as most students study it from early on. Having been in awe of the level and consideration of all issues related to language, I experienced a harsh reality check a few weeks ago. I eagerly sat in the front row among about twenty students in my first Italian (level 2) class, taught through the University Language Center. The teacher, a young Finnish woman, smilingly welcomed us with *Buon Giorno, Buon Anno Nuovo* and launched into a long explanation of the course—in Finnish! I assumed she would continue in Italian and she did, telling a

story of her trip to Napoli at Christmas time and of the garbage crisis in the country. However, before we had a chance to digest any of this, she translated it all into Finnish. The only communicative exercise we did was reading aloud in pairs the dialogues printed in the book. I was so annoyed that I even started to be bothered by the Finnish accent in her otherwise excellent Italian, the effect of my 'Italian' daughter's finely-tuned ear and her comments on accents.

Obviously, I couldn't stay in that class. I found out about another one at the same level, taught by an Italian professor. After his si to my emailed request to attend the class, I happily marched into my second Italian class of the day, two hours later. The professor walked in, greeted us with *Buona Sera* and launched into an explanation of what was to follow—in Finnish! He did promise more Italian by March! I decided to stay as he did explain grammar for two hours—a good match for my non-existent knowledge of Italian grammar. We'll see how this will work!

I discussed the lack of target language use with a fellow student who is also a high-school English teacher. She completely agreed with the teaching philosophy of minimal use of the target language, and explained that at such a basic level we needed the teaching done in Finnish. I disagreed and shared my experience of a Berkeley night class of absolute beginning Italian, conducted completely in the target language. What I left out was that we did quickly lose several monolingual American students who just couldn't handle it.

I refused to give up! The University Language Center came to the rescue! They offer many interesting programs, among them, Each One Teach One, also known as EOTO. This is how the website describes it: EOTO is a program for you who want to get to know students from different countries and learn different languages. During this two-credit program, students teach each other their mother tongues and learn the language of their partner. In addition to working in pairs, you can also study languages in small groups, or start up conversation groups or study circles that concentrate on only one language.

When I checked the site message board, I found two Italians. In just ten minutes, I was emailing with a professor from Italy, now teaching at Jyväskylä, and setting up a

meeting over coffee for the following morning. We got together, set the rules for our weekly interactions, and we're good to go. *Andiamo!*

The issues around language teaching and learning are many and complex. They also seem to be quite similar to those in the UC system. Globalization, media, and technology are all issues of great interest. In fact, the University of Jyväskylä is a pioneer in virtual language teaching, and my job here includes creating new modules for existing virtual Finnish courses as well as creating a new online literature course. I also teach an Internet-based course with students from China to Macedonia and everywhere in between. What makes Jyväskylä especially exciting to me is the range of languages taught and the research carried out around the issues. Language learning and language teaching are considered important academic fields, strongly supported by the government. They are in no way less valued than literature studies. So many new ideas! I'm eager to share more after my return to Berkeley.

Foreign Language Issues in Korea

by Clare You, Lecturer in Korean, Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures, and Chair, Center for Korean Studies

Few countries surpass Korea in its enthusiasm for foreign language learning, above all for learning English. The desire and inexhaustible demand for acquiring fluency in English has created English Villages, replicas of American cities, where participating students must use only English. (There is much debate on the value and efficacy of the program.) “*Kirugi* (wild geese) parents” is the situation in which one parent (usually the mother) takes up residency in an English-speaking country such as the United States, Canada, Australia, or New Zealand with the children while the other parent (usually the father) flies between Korea and the foreign residence. Early Study Abroad students are sent to foreign boarding schools at a young age. There are numerous English *hakwon*’s (institutes or academies) throughout the city of Seoul—one of the world’s largest cities with over 10 million people—to which children as young as three are bussed. During summer vacations and the winter breaks, students go abroad to gain a real-world English experience.

In December 2006, the Korean Ministry of Finance and Economy announced a plan to establish English-only Town on the Island of Jeju with a government land grant of 3.79 million square meters and a government capital infusion with the hope of slowing the flow of capital to the US. “According to the Bank of Korea, Korean students spent over \$3.3 billion to study abroad last year. We think that if we create a superior educational and residential environment on Jeju as planned, there will be fewer students going to foreign countries to learn English.” (Korea.net)

What accounts for the English-mania in recent years in Korea?

We may find an answer in this interview with Professor Chul Park, President of the Association of Korean Foreign Language Education: “We [Korea] lack natural resources and the land is limited. Our only reliable asset is human resources. By destiny, we can only survive by reaching out to foreign countries. Thus foreign language

education is a direct means for our survival.” In addition, he points out that English is overly emphasized while other languages fall by the wayside, and he therefore advocates for a future language policy requiring that languages such as Chinese, French, German, Japanese, and Spanish be taught from middle school onward.

Conversely, our recent research on the Korean language diaspora shows that it is a two-way phenomenon: not only are Korean speakers trying to learn foreign languages but foreigners are trying to learn Korean. The number of learners of Korean has exploded in recent decades, especially in China, Japan, Kazakhstan, Russia, and the US.

The most important contributing factors for the popularity of Korean language learning are Korea’s economic growth and its globalized society, and *hallyu* or “Korea Wave.” With the economy of Korea ranking eleventh in the world, Korean companies are now a global presence from the Americas to Africa. They hire and support sizable numbers of local employees who find it to their advantage to know Korean. This was pointed out in a June 2, 2007 article by Miriam Jordan in *The Wall Street Journal* which states that “many Spanish- and Korean-speaking immigrants are choosing to learn each other’s language before they tackle English.” Many immigrants are taking lessons in Korean rather than in English in Los Angeles, for example.

A second salient factor is known as the “Korean wave” or *hallyu*, which refers to the popularity of Korean language and culture that began with the exported Korean dramas, movies, and songs of the early 2000s. These two factors—the job market and *hallyu*—count as the most influential reasons for taking Korean classes given by non-heritage Asian American students in an informal survey taken at Berkeley (Clare You, 2006).

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Reevaluating and Redesigning the Portuguese Language Curriculum

by Clélia F. Donovan, Lecturer in Portuguese, Spanish and Portuguese

Last year, the professors in my department asked me to design an upper-division reading and textual analysis course for the Portuguese program, as they have found that a large number of students who continue studying to an advanced level lack the fundamental skills of discourse analysis in Portuguese. My initial BLC project, therefore, was to create a course that would prepare students for upper-division literature courses.

With this goal in mind, I turned to Richard Kern's *Literacy and Language Teaching* and Janet Swaffar's and Katherine Arens' *Remapping the Foreign Language Curriculum: An Approach through Multiple Literacies*. Having read no more than the first several pages, however, I realized that a course such as the one I was asked to devise would be no more than a mere band-aid on an ancient sore. What these scholars, along with many others in the field, argue convincingly is that the most effective way to bridge the nagging gap between language and literature courses is to integrate the study of literature and culture into every level of the foreign language curriculum. It was abundantly clear to me that were we to do this, our students would have the tools necessary to expand and bolster their ability to interpret and critically evaluate texts of the Lusophone world, and consequently would excel not only in upper division literature courses in our department, but in any endeavor involving reading.

Accordingly, my revised BLC project consisted of reexamining and redesigning the Portuguese language program. Within the timeframe of the grant, I decided to develop, for the three levels I teach (101, 102, and 103), lesson plans centered on a single text, a song entitled *Construção*, by one of Brazil's greatest popular music composers, Chico Buarque, and show how the emphasis becomes more complex over the semesters.

Written in 1971 at the height of Brazilian dictatorship, *Construção* narrates a day in the life of a nameless bricklayer. His day begins like any other but culminates in his tragic death, a death perceived, sadly, as a disruption. The salient features of this text are the use of the simple past and the imperfect subjunctive, metaphor, *proparoxitona* words (where the stress falls on the antepenultimate syllable), and repetition.

At the 101-level, the text would be used when students are learning the simple past. As a pre-reading exercise, they would discuss daily activities in terms of common and specific as well as place. This part of the lesson exposes students to concepts and sets the stage for them to connect the known to the unknown. Through minimal-pair discrimination (common vs. specific), they locate members of a category (Swaffar). Students would continue with a directed reading, a directed thinking activity, asking them to express their thinking about how a text presents information, to confirm or disconfirm what has been said, and to make predictions about forthcoming information (Swaffar). I would do this by distributing the text in sections and by asking what they think will happen next, in terms of place or actions, why they think so, and then having them compare their answers with the text. Provided with limited amounts of text at a time, they establish the facts on which to base their interpretation. Additionally, this exercise of hypothesizing, describing, and confirming models how interpretation is constructed (Swaffar).

After rereading to identify, reproduce, and express textual messages, by reading silently, and listening to the entire song, students would reconstruct in their own words what happened as well as comment on the construction of the text (namely the use of repetition throughout the song). Here, students perform tasks that link content to language choice. As readers, they attempt to retrieve textual messages in order to reconstruct in their own language. They look more closely at the linguistic choices made by the author, link formal text features to meaning—the use of repetition, for example. They move from formal analysis to interpretive activity (Swaffar).

The last part of the lesson involves focusing on the organization of ideas. This may be achieved by asking students to consider what the political situation was in Brazil at the time this song was composed and what the author might be saying about working conditions under military dictatorship. What is the link between the repetitiveness of his daily activities, which become increasingly illogical, and his death? How does the situation depicted in *Construção* compare to how certain workers are treated in the US? By asking students to look outside the frame of the text, they focus on the larger socio-cultural context in which it was produced, and they are encouraged to make connections and comparisons to their own culture and their expectations of it (Swaffar). This would be followed by a production or transformation activity in order to assess students' global understanding.

In Portuguese 102, the song would be presented along with other texts during a weeklong lesson on Chico Buarque, in which students acquire a much deeper understanding of the social conditions in Brazil during the 1960s and '70s. The song would be examined in terms of its genre, that is, Brazilian Popular Music, considering for whom and in what conditions Chico is writing, and presented alongside other texts (poems, an interview, a film). The importance of using genres in the foreign language classroom has been deftly argued in both of the books referenced. Additionally, because one of the most salient features of the song is the use of metaphor, it would be an excellent choice of a text to discuss how this rhetorical figure functions. A writing exercise at this level could consist of comparing the representation of Brazil at different moments in time as presented in the various texts, thereby affording students a much deeper understanding of the social conditions surrounding the work.

Lastly, at the 103-level, *Construção* would be presented during the portion of the course dedicated to poetry. Students would fully explore the text's literary features (meter, rhythm, and stanzas), as well linguistic aspects (the rhetorical figures and vocabulary). Through comparisons with other poems, students would reflect on what might be

implied about the life of the unidentified mason who dies a tragic death as narrated in alexandrine verse.

As students' knowledge of language grows, so does their capacity for critical analysis in the target language. By choosing to use the same text at three different levels, we have seen how it may be presented in isolation to expose a social critique of a dark period in history; how juxtaposing it with other genres from the same period affords a greater understanding of not only the evolution of cultural conditions surrounding the work, but also how it fits into a larger body of work; and finally how it compares with other poems. To me, it's as if we had been operating under the assumption that first students must obtain linguistic competence in order to subsequently study literature, when in fact, that linguistic competence may be attained through literary and other kinds of texts.

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Construção

*Amou daquela vez como se fosse a última
Beijou sua mulher como se fosse a última
E cada filho seu como se fosse o único
E atravessou a rua com seu passo tímido
Subiu a construção como se fosse máquina
Ergueu no patamar quatro paredes sólidas
Tijolo por tijolo num desenho mágico
Seus olhos embotados de cimento e lágrima
Sentou prá descansar como se fosse sábado
Comeu feijão com arroz como se fosse um príncipe
Bebeu e soluçou como se fosse um náufrago
Dançou e gargalhou como se ouvisse música
E tropeçou no céu como se fosse um bêbado
E flutuou no ar como se fosse um pássaro
E se acabou no chão feito um pacote flácido*

*E agonizou no meio do passeio público
Morreu na contramão atrapalhando o tráfego*

*Amou daquela vez como se fosse o último
Beijou sua mulher como se fosse a única
E cada filho seu como se fosse o pródigo
E atravessou a rua com seu passo bêbado
Subiu a construção como se fosse sólido
Ergueu no patamar quatro paredes mágicas
Tijolo por tijolo num desenho lógico
Seus olhos embotados de cimento e tráfego
Sentou prá descansar como se fosse um príncipe
Comeu feijão com arroz como se fosse o máximo
Bebeu e soluçou como se fosse máquina
Dançou e gargalhou como se fosse o próximo
E tropeçou no céu como se ouvisse música
E flutuou no ar como se fosse sábado
E se acabou no chão feito um pacote tímido
E agonizou no meio do passeio náufrago
Morreu na contramão atrapalhando o público*

*Amou daquela vez como se fosse máquina
Beijou sua mulher como se fosse lógico
Ergueu no patamar quatro paredes flácidas
Sentou prá descansar como se fosse um pássaro
E flutuou no ar como se fosse um príncipe
E se acabou no chão feito um pacote bêbado
Morreu na contramão atrapalhando o sábado*

Construction

[He] made love that time as if it were the last
Kissed his wife as if she were the last
And each son as if he were the only
And crossed the street with his step timid
Went up the construction as if he were a machine
Raised on the foundation four walls solid
Brick by brick in a design magical
His eyes blurred with cement and tears
Sat to rest as if it were Saturday
Ate beans and rice as if he were a prince
Drank and hiccupped/cried as if he were shipwrecked
Danced and guffawed as if listening to music
And tripped in the sky as if he were a drunk
And floated in the air as if he were a bird-
And ended up on the ground like a package flaccid
Agonized in the middle of the sidewalk public

Died in the one way street disrupting the traffic

[He] made love that time as if he were the last
Kissed his wife as if she were the only
And each son as if he were the prodigal
And crossed the street with his step drunken
Went up the construction as if he were solid
Raised on the foundation four walls magical
Brick by brick in a design logical
His eyes blurred with cement and traffic
Sat to rest as if he were a prince
Ate beans and rice as if it were amazing/
outrageous
Drank and hiccupped/cried as if he were a machine
Danced and guffawed as if he were a fellow man
And tripped in the sky as if he were listening to music
And floated in the air as if it were Saturday
And ended up on the ground like a package timid
Agonized in the middle of the sidewalk shipwrecked
Died in the one way street disrupting the public

[He] made love that time as if he were a machine
Kissed his wife as if it were logical
Raised on the foundation four walls flaccid
Sat to rest as if he were a bird
And floated in the air as if he were a prince
And ended up on the ground like a package drunken
Died in the one way street disrupting the Saturday

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Reading *Les Misérables*: A Study of French Learners' Developing Ability to Comprehend and Interpret French Literature

by *Miranda I. Kentfield, PhD*
Candidate, French

As a literary scholar and French language instructor, I am committed to helping my students master the French language while also honing their ability to read, interpret, and write about French literature. My BLC project evolved out of a desire to investigate how college French learners at varying levels of language mastery read and interpret works of French prose fiction. A certain amount of research has addressed the connection between language learning and literary study, most notably the work of David Hanauer and James N. Davis. However, not much is known about the level of interpretive sophistication achieved by learners at various stages in the language acquisition process. As David Hanauer observes, "there is very little actual empirical data related to the reading and comprehension of literature within the language classroom" (295). I hoped that by analyzing how students' literary skills develop over time, I might discover which skills were the most difficult to acquire. These skills could then be reinforced pedagogically, allowing us to better serve students' needs.

Research Objectives

My research was guided by a central objective: to evaluate students' ability to comprehend and interpret literary texts as they pass from the intermediate to the advanced stages of language learning. What types of interpretive skills do students master at the intermediate as opposed to the advanced levels of language learning? Can they identify formal elements of prose narratives and evaluate the relationship between form and ideas or meaning in a text, or are they more comfortable with strictly thematic forms of analysis? While students are often taught to focus on form when reading poetry, I wondered whether they would be able to transfer these skills to the study of prose narratives.

Research Design

The developmental focus of my study led me to select two subject groups: a group of intermediate learners, enrolled in an advanced lower-division language course (French 4), and a group of advanced learners enrolled in upper division literature courses. I managed to find twenty-seven intermediate subjects, but only seven advanced subjects. When compared with the intermediate learner group (French 4), students in the advanced learner group had completed a minimum of one additional course (French 102) in literary writing and analysis.

Since I am particularly fond of the French novel, I created an assessment task that focused on the reading and interpretation of prose fiction. I presented students with a series of excerpts from Victor Hugo's novel *Les Misérables* that recounted the transformative experiences of the novel's hero, Jean Valjean. The excerpts were several paragraphs in length. Students were asked to read the text in the original French, and then respond to a series of questions. Each student chose whether to respond in French or in English. Students were also given an optional feedback sheet to fill out. They completed the task in forty-five to seventy-five minutes (no time limit was imposed). Most students were not allowed to use a dictionary, although translations were provided for many difficult words. However, ten intermediate subjects were allowed to use a dictionary. The availability of a dictionary influenced student performance on just one of the eight questions posed.

Written Task Results

Three types of skills were evaluated: reading comprehension, thematic analysis, and formal analysis. Reading comprehension involved understanding and accurately reproducing factual information conveyed by the text. Thematic analysis involved offering a justifiable interpretation of the themes, ideas, or implied meanings in a text by relying on the use of textual evidence. While formal analysis encompasses a broad range of interpretive tasks, I chose to focus on students' ability to work with imagery and poetic (including figurative) language in the text. I evaluated, first, whether they could recognize such formal features, and

second, whether they could explain how those features contributed to the meaning or ideas expressed by the text.

Here's a brief summary of the results for each learner group:

Intermediate learners (French 4 level):

Reading Comprehension: Success with basic questions and developing skills with more complex questions.

Thematic Analysis: Partial success—students are developing their skills, but the majority had difficulty with the more complex questions.

Formal Analysis: Some skill with interpreting imagery. About one third of students succeeded in identifying poetic language in the text. Very few students successfully linked these formal features to the meaning or ideas of the text.

Advanced learners (upper division level):

Reading comprehension: Success with basic questions. The majority of students achieved mastery of more complex questions and all are developing their skills.

Thematic analysis: Many students show mastery, and all are developing their skills.

Formal analysis: Considerable skill with imagery. Partial success in identifying poetic language. Students are beginning to develop an ability to connect such language to the meaning or ideas in a prose narrative, but have yet to achieve mastery.

These results confirm what we would hope and expect to find: that advanced learners show greater interpretive and comprehension abilities than intermediate learners. Although the general findings of this study are not very surprising, this form of assessment is useful to instructors because it offers specific information about which skills students master at different stages of language learning, allowing us to identify areas that could be reinforced pedagogically. Results suggest that students at both learning levels might benefit from explicit instruction about the formal aspects of prose narratives and how they contribute to the establishment of meaning in a literary text. In addition, a written task of this kind provides a helpful opportunity for students to practice reading an unfamiliar text and demonstrating their skills independently, without the benefit of

classroom discussion and instruction. Successful performance under such conditions shows that students have truly integrated their classroom learning. The task itself could be adapted for classroom use, providing students with an opportunity to practice various forms of interpretive analysis and discuss the results with their instructor.

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Yiddish as a Vernacular Language: Issues in Teaching a Language in Obsolescence

by Robert Adler Peckerar, PhD
Candidate, Comparative Literature

Initially, my project set out to address what I saw as the three greatest problems affecting Yiddish language instruction at the university level. These problems, I believe, stem from the inherent difficulty of teaching a language in the aftermath of a genocide that murdered one out of every two speakers of the language.

The first issue is that, unlike nearly every language taught at the university, Yiddish lacks a physical territory, a nation-state or a distinct entity on a map to which one can indicate a set of colors that represent Yiddophone space. In its dispersion, number of living speakers, and lack of a geographical center, Yiddish is perhaps most similar to Romani (a language taught almost exclusively in departments of linguistics). A lack of territorial boundaries accounts for the problem of placement in the national languages and literature departments. In the handful of Yiddish language programs in North America, Yiddish is taught in the departments of German (as it is at Berkeley), departments of Jewish Studies, and, curiously, in departments of Near Eastern Studies. In its status as a tagged-on, ill-fitting course, Yiddish language instruction is often on the top of the list of classes cut for budgetary reasons and instructors lack the resources available to instructors in the "major" languages.

In addition to the lack of departmental support, Yiddish suffers from a lack of a speech and cultural community that will interact with contemporary, secular students of Yiddish. This is significant because, even though Yiddish is a language with a rapidly growing population of native speakers, this growth is confined to Hasidic enclaves (in Brooklyn, upstate New York, Israel, and Belgium, for example) and with the rare exception, Hasidim avoid contact with secular culture in general and with secular

Jews in particular. Consequently, the native or near-native speakers of Yiddish are, for the most part, elderly. In addition, very little contemporary culture works are produced for contemporary students to have at their disposal in a Yiddish classroom. With the diminishing number of native speakers, Yiddish instructors are confronted with an ever-growing unnaturalness of speech, a situation that is tragically ironic, considering that Yiddish was the vernacular of the vast majority of Jews in the world prior to the Second World War. Students rarely, if ever, hear Yiddish the way it was spoken: inflection, idiomaticity, and pragmatics have disappeared from the classroom, leaving students not only ignorant of the cultural context in which Yiddish was spoken but also lacking communicative and expressive competence. Not hearing native speakers using dialectal varieties of pronunciation systems also leaves students unable to comprehend Yiddish when they do meet native speakers, listen to older music recordings, or view movies, as the students are only exposed to the so-called standard variety of the language used in textbooks and in modern classes. This variety of Yiddish was only adopted as a standard in the 1920s and its phonology is based on a minority pronunciation (Northeastern Yiddish) while most spoken or performed Yiddish is Southern or Southeastern Yiddish.

This brings us to our third problem and the one I hoped to address in my project, the language textbook. Anglophone Yiddish courses, by and large, use one of two textbooks at the university level. The most widely used is *College Yiddish* (1949), by Uriel Weinreich. *College Yiddish* is a language textbook typical of the 1940s. The structure of each chapter follows a particular template: exemplary text, vocabulary list, relevant grammar, and drills (translation exercises between English and Yiddish). Weinreich's book also has a particular agenda (language standardization) and audience (American students who have had a great deal of prior exposure to Yiddish and need to be guided away from their home varieties of Yiddish into the standard language). The book assumes that students already have the basics of Yiddish conversation and does not even approach the material modern textbooks

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generally begin with, such as greetings and introductions, until the very middle of the text.

Fifty years after the publication of *College Yiddish*, a new text was published by Sheva Zucker, called simply *Yiddish*. The motivation for her textbook is quite clear; she hopes to update the Weinreich text and to modernize its layout. But, on the whole, Zucker's book maintains the same template as *College Yiddish*, although her exemplary texts are more or less contemporary and there is some awareness that the students using this textbook may have had no prior exposure to Yiddish.

So what is a Yiddish instructor to do? Yiddish, as the latest MLA report on languages has shown is experiencing an upsurge in student enrollment. Percentage-wise (though not in the number of students) Yiddish is second only to Arabic in its increase in students. This year, for the first time in the history of Yiddish courses at Berkeley, the beginning Yiddish class had a waitlist and had quadrupled its enrollment over the past four years. Yet, after finishing two semesters of Yiddish, students report a sense of disappointment and frustration at not being able to understand Yiddish as it is spoken and performed by native speakers of non-Standard Yiddish.

My project, in which I initially planned to develop a textbook or textbook model, made an early turn to the Web. In its ability to integrate multimedia and de-fragment acoustic, visual, and textual material, the Web seemed like an ideal space for Yiddish instruction. I was also intrigued by the idea of creating a virtual space where Yiddish could have its own pseudo-territory, where students could interact with a world of other Yiddish speakers and learners outside the classroom. Most importantly, a Web-driven textbook allowed for a shift away from drill-based instruction to an interactive space of enhanced collaborativity. The end result of the project was the development of a concrete Web-based first unit of a textbook (<http://yiddish.berkeley.edu/lesson1/>) and a hard-copy workbook that could accompany the Web book. There is still much to be done to facilitate a full modernization of Yiddish language pedagogy and I hope to be

able to further develop a textbook that can assist in the teaching of Yiddish as a more natural-sounding language that teaches not only grammar and vocabulary by a series of translation drills, but also allows for students to develop a communicative and cultural competence in language facing a complex form of obsolescence.

Designing Instruction for Young English Learners from an Ecological Perspective of Language Learning

by Lyn Scott, PhD Candidate, School of Education

When elementary school teachers plan instruction for English learners in their classrooms, a variety of constraints and opportunities shape the pedagogical resources available to teachers. In the current era of increased standardized testing, federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requirements, and a narrowed curriculum, teachers often feel their pedagogical resources are constrained to scripted textbook materials or feel encouraged to streamline instruction with repetitive or de-contextualized drills. Yet, opportunities still exist for teachers to delve into their own repertoire of pedagogical knowledge in order to tailor instruction to individual student's needs, capitalize on teachable moments, and help students to build upon their background knowledge.

My BLC project was an exploratory case study of a team of three third grade teachers in an urban California elementary school. The teachers illustrated that the art of teaching includes not only classroom management, assessing student learning, and delivering textbook instruction from the teacher's manual, but also engaging students in their own learning, inspiring multilingual learners, and building upon background knowledge. My goals were to understand the teachers' collaboration in planning instruction for English learners in their classrooms and to focus teachers' attention on the holistic language ecology of their students' daily lives in order to add an

Ecological Perspective of Language Learning to the teachers' pedagogical repertoire.

The English learners in their classrooms speak a variety of home languages offering teachers a rich mosaic of opportunities to draw upon from the students' local environment and personal experiences. Teachers were encouraged to make connections from the information they had about students from the home, neighborhood, playground, and classroom, as well as from the teachers' own professional knowledge.

For example, the veteran teacher in the study, a Spanish-English bilingual teacher, said that she often observed that some children arrived at the school monolingual in Spanish in kindergarten and then appeared to be unable to speak much Spanish when they arrived at her bilingual third grade classroom a few years later. Later, she connected this to her own experience growing up in a Spanish-speaking home, but losing her Spanish proficiency and only speaking English until she was politicized as a college student, re-capturing her heritage and her proficiency in Spanish. As a teacher she strived to discourage home language loss among her bilingual students.

Theoretical Background

An Ecological Perspective of Language Learning has gained currency in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research and theoretical work in recent years through the work of Kramsch (2002), Larsen-Freeman (2002), Lemke (2002), and van Lier (2004). Several features of this research have special prominence with regard to young children. Language learning is emergent, with different meanings appearing at different times and on different timescales. As meaning emerges, teachers have opportunities to capture teachable moments. Language learning is also mediated, for example, through social encounters, pictures, or texts—thus, for children, through their own personal experiences.

Especially critical for classroom instruction is the notion that the language ecology is fractal. Broader issues of language may be found within much smaller fractals of interaction. By capitalizing on appropriate fractals, teachers can present their students

with classroom lessons drawn from the outside language ecology that are connected to their background knowledge.

Overlapping, complementary relationships in the ecology of language are complex and seemingly chaotic. The key for teachers is appreciating the connections between points in this complexity. An Ecological Perspective of Language Learning allows teachers to both 1) analyze the existing language ecology and 2) plan and design classroom instruction based on knowledge of the existing language ecology and research-based SLA methodologies.

Early discussions among the teachers made it apparent that elementary school teachers must also incorporate an Ecological Perspective of Child Development (Bronfenbrenner, 1986) into SLA theories. Bronfenbrenner, a developmental psychologist, articulated that children develop in nested micro-systems that may include family, school, peer, or religious settings. With respect to language learning, each micro-system has its own language ecology that offers the child unique experiences and contributes to the child's background knowledge. In this case study, teachers observed that children from Mien-speaking families encountered Spanish and African American Vernacular English in their peer culture, but little of their home language outside the home. In the classroom, standard American English was the expected norm with home languages other than Spanish rarely used.

In collaborative planning sessions, teachers shared information about their students' linguistic and life histories in the school and family domains. They drew upon theoretical work that emphasizes that children bring funds of knowledge to the classroom from the various domains of their life. This work by Moll, et al. (1992) encourages teachers to examine household and classroom practices qualitatively to "develop innovations in teaching that draw upon the knowledge and skills found in local households in order to organize classroom instruction that exceeds the rote-like instruction children commonly encounter in schools." Thus, when meeting parents or visiting the home, teachers encouraged ideas to emerge through an open-ended interviewing strategy so that

they could capitalize on household and other non-school resources as they prepared classroom English Language Development (ELD) instruction.

The School, Students, and Teachers

The school is in an ethnically diverse, working class neighborhood of predominantly Latino, African-American, and Asian/Pacific Islander families. Twenty-nine of the fifty-four students in the three third grade classrooms are designated as English learners with 82percent having been in a California school since kindergarten. Students' home languages include African-American Vernacular and American English, Mexican and Central American Spanish, Mam, Tongan, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Cantonese, Mien, and other African and Asian languages.

The three collaborating teachers in this case study are a white, monolingual novice teacher in her second year of teaching, a bilingual Latina veteran teacher in her eighteenth year of teaching, and a white, monolingual exemplary teacher (as referred to by colleagues and administrators) in her ninth year of teaching. Teachers integrate ELD into the two-hour morning language arts block and a specific ELD lesson time for 20-30 minutes each afternoon. Their collaboration for ELD instruction planning is ongoing, through informal daily meetings, weekly grade level cohort meetings, monthly peer observations, and biannual school-wide professional development in ELD.

Teacher Research and Collaboration

Using informal assessment of students' linguistic biographies, teachers gathered information through a home language survey and parent communication, observation of students' language preference among peers, and examination of the neighborhood's linguistic landscape. Teachers found linguistic background information: one, for example, noted, "I didn't realize she spoke Mam (an indigenous language of the Guatemalan Highlands)." Drawing upon the student's funds of knowledge, a base-ten math lesson was designed to utilize the Mam language's regular counting system (e.g., ...nine, ten,

ten-one, ten-two...) rather than English's irregular (...nine, ten, eleven, twelve...) counting system.

During the teacher's collaborative planning time, teachers shared concerns about the narrow parameters for the school's success as determined by the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) score of the NCLB Act. One teacher asked, "Which area did we miss it (AYP) in?" The response ("ELD. We needed to go up by 10 points.") showed a focus on collective test improvement rather than individual student growth.

Teachers also expressed shortcomings in the school district's mandated student ELD texts and teachers' manuals although each teacher felt differently about a plan of action. The following condensed exchange shows the range of concerns expressed by the teachers and the principal's representative—the instructional coach—during their planning time for the afternoon ELD lesson.

Exemplary teacher: "Do we have any flexibility with this program?"

Veteran teacher: "The old publisher was much better."

Exemplary teacher: "There are no pictures now."

Instructional coach: "We only have 20 minutes."

Novice teacher: "The new program is too easy for some and too hard for others who get blown over by the high group."

Exemplary teacher: "Could we make this a culture class?"

Veteran teacher: "Special activities are OK for some students who don't need extra help."

The teachers' comments illustrate three instructional perspectives in many teachers' pedagogical repertoires. The first, the diagnostic approach, is based on formal, school-based assessment of the student through standardized test scores, English proficiency scores, and a narrow focus on student deficiencies. The veteran teacher was willing to de-emphasize the mandated text during instruction in favor of re-teaching phonetic and consonant blending drills that a group of the students was unable to master. These drills were de-contextualized and repetitive.

Fellows' Reports

The second, the reactionistic approach, relies on the mandated texts and teacher's manual to provide the totality of pedagogical tools needed for ELD instruction. The novice teacher appreciated the shortcomings of a one-size-fits-all curriculum but felt unable, at this stage in her career, to differentiate instruction for the diverse learners. She preferred re-grouping students so that each teacher could teach her preferred approach.

The final approach, an ecological perspective, was preferred by the exemplary teacher who wanted to capitalize on connections between students' home language and school language practices. She applied her knowledge of skills and resources found in children's households and encouraged students, for example, to reflect critically on how they address elders and siblings at home in their home language variety, then mirror this in English in the classroom as they reflect upon how they address classmates and teachers at school. Students dramatized playground interactions in the classroom, which they had generated earlier. Thus, ELD instruction became a time for conflict resolution and expressing language appropriate for the situation and to the person addressed. As students' ideas emerged, the teacher was able to adapt instruction as students played with language during role-play, experimented with poetry, or rhymed musical lyrics.

The three approaches offer insight into the potential and the limits of collaborative efforts to foster instruction informed by a holistic examination of the language ecology of student's day-to-day life. While an Ecological Perspective of Language Learning is a well-grounded hypothesis that is receiving considerable discussion in SLA and language pedagogy research, it needs rigorous empirical work among practitioners and researchers. At the elementary school level, it can encourage teachers both to reflect holistically about their students' ELD environment and to innovate when designing instruction that builds upon the multilingual resources which children bring to the classroom from their homes and peer interactions.

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UC Language Consortium Conference on SLA
Theoretical and Pedagogical Perspectives

University of California, Santa Barbara
April 25-27, 2008

KEYNOTE SPEAKER:

Professor Rod Ellis

Applied Language Studies & Linguistics
University of Auckland

On April 27th, Rod Ellis will also lead a half-day workshop

We invite submissions for presentations from scholars in all disciplines who are involved in research on second language learning and teaching.

Please see the UC Consortium Website for details concerning submission of abstracts
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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.

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Newsletter

Volume 23

Issue 2

Spring 2008