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## ABSTRACT

This collection of papers is divided into two parts. After "Introduction" (L. Kathy Heilenman), Part 1, "Research and Language Program Directors: The Relationship," includes "Research Domains and Language Program Direction" (Bill VanPatten); "Language Program Direction and the Modernist Agenda" (Celeste Kinginger); "The Research-Pedagogy Interface in L2 Acquisition: Implications for Language Program Directors" (Raphael Salaberry); and "Applications of Sociolinguistic and Sociocultural Research to the French Language Classroom" (Nadine O'Connor Di Vito). Part 2, "Research and Language Program Directors: Possibilities," includes "Beliefs and Practices of Teacher Assistants toward Target Language Use in Elementary French Classes" (Michael Morris); "Gesture in Japanese Language Instruction: The Case of Error Correction" (Naoko Muramoto); "Investigating the Properties of Assessment Instruments and the Setting of Proficiency Standards for Admission in to University Second Language Courses" (Micheline Chalhoub-Deville); "Positional Pedagogies and Understanding the Other: Epistemological Research, Subjective Theories, Narratives, and the Language Program Director in a 'Web of Relationship'" (Mary E. Wildner-Basset and Birgit Meerholz-Haerle); and "The Professionalization of Language Teachers: A Case Study of the Professional Development Needs of Lecturers at the University of California, Berkeley" (Nelleke Van Deusen-Scholl, Linda von Hoene, and Karen Moller-Irving). (Papers contain references.) (SM)

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AAUSC  
Issues in Language Program Direction  
*A Series of Annual Volumes*

# Research Issues and Language Program Direction

**L. Kathy Heilenman**  
Editor

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# **Research Issues and Language Program Direction**

***L. Kathy Heilenman***  
***Editor***

**American Association of University Supervisors, Coordinators,  
and Directors of Foreign Language Programs (AAUSC)**

**Issues in Language Program Direction  
A Series of Annual Volumes**

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# INTRODUCTION

**L. Kathy Heilenman**

*The University of Iowa*

This volume, *Research Issues in Language Program Direction*, is the ninth in the AAUSC series of annual volumes dealing with issues in language program direction. The volume is divided into two parts. The first, *Research and Language Program Directors: The Relationship*, deals with how research fits into the lives of language program directors (LPDs). The second part, *Research and Language Program Directors: Possibilities*, contains examples of the variety of research that LPDs have found appropriate and useful.

## Overview of Articles

The four articles in the first section address important issues in the lives and careers of LPDs. VanPatten (*Research Domains and Language Program Direction*) poses vital questions about LPDs' roles as scholars and researchers. What kinds of research are possible? How is a research agenda set and developed? What is the relationship between graduate studies and the research component of an LPD's professional career? And finally, should the field of applied linguistics/second language acquisition continue to exist within the same academic structure (department) as literary studies? The answers he provides have implications not only for individual LPDs but also for the wider vistas of graduate education and governance structures.

Celeste Kinginger (*Language Program Direction and the Modernist Agenda*) provides a provocative description of the interaction between research specialization, language pedagogy, and language program direction, suggesting that "modernist research" is inherently limiting to the entire enterprise. Kinginger suggests that LPDs should seek to establish "coherent approaches to practice" and to resist the restrictions imposed by a research agenda that is distanced from practical work. In a similar vein, Rafael Salaberry (*The Research-Pedagogy Interface in L2 Acquisition: Implications for*

*Language Program Directors*) discusses the role of research—taken in a large sense—in the development of a language program and in the professionalization of program staff. He terms this the “research-pedagogy interface” and provides discussion of the interface between research findings and L2 pedagogy. The last paper in this section is by Nadine Di Vito (*Applications of Sociolinguistic and Sociocultural Research to the French Language Classroom*). Di Vito’s contribution represents a case study of how research and language program direction can work in tandem. Her research in the area of French corpora linguistics and French/US intercultural pragmatics is an example of the beneficial synergy brought to language program direction by a well-thought-out research agenda.

The second section of this volume contains five articles, each of which exemplifies research LPDs are likely to find relevant to their own situations. The first, *Beliefs and Practices of Teaching Assistants toward Target Language Use in Elementary French Classes*, by Michael Morris, discusses classroom language choice as reflected upon by teaching assistants. This is a qualitative study illustrating the use of video, interview, and questionnaire data to investigate classroom behavior. Morris’ conclusions—that language choice is a function of several interdependent forces—provides useful information for LPDs as they set up curricula and deal with novice teachers. The second paper in this section, *Gesture in Japanese Language Instruction: The Case of Error Correction*, by Naoko Muramoto, is an exploratory study of a seldom investigated area, that of gestures, in the second language classroom. Her data indicate that the use of gestures for error correction tends to follow the familiar verbal pattern found in classrooms of initiation-response-evaluation. The third paper, *Investigating the Properties of Assessment Instruments and the Setting of Proficiency Standards for Admission into University Second Language Courses*, by Micheline Chalhoub-Deville, represents a quantitative study in the area of assessment. Chalhoub-Deville documents the psychometric properties of the proficiency-based assessment instruments used as part of the Minnesota Articulation Project, with particular emphasis on the process of standard setting.

The fourth contribution, *Positional Pedagogies and Understanding the Other: Epistemological Research, Subjective Theories, Narratives, and the Language Program Director in a “Web of Relationships,”* authored by Mary E. Wildner-Bassett and Birgit Meerholz-Haerle, discusses two qualitative studies concerning how theories are co-constructed, one within the context


of language section meetings, and one as part of a graduate seminar focusing on the “Other.” These two qualitative studies illustrate an approach to research that echoes that taken by Kinginger. The final article, *The Professionalization of Language Teachers: A Case Study of the Professional Development Needs of Lecturers at the University of California, Berkeley*, by Nelleke Van Deusen-Scholl, Linda von Hoene, and Karen Møller-Irving, uses survey/questionnaire data to describe the situation within a program where the majority of language instructors are *not* expected to construct active research agendas. The authors document the need for providing research resources for professional language teachers and set out a framework for such professional development.

## Conclusion


The position of LPD is a complex one. Teaching, for LPDs, frequently extends beyond the immediate classroom context to the mentoring of both graduate students (novice teachers) and professional staff. In addition, LPDs may or may not be expected to establish an active and coherent research agenda as part of their conditions of employment. Added to the mix is the fact that, as of present, there is no established route by which one becomes an LPD. That is, there is no established graduate program curriculum that prepares future LPDs. Given the above, it should come as small surprise that many LPDs find situating themselves within a comfortable research space—whether as producers or consumers or adapters—to be a distinctly uncomfortable process and one that is fraught with difficulties. As attested to by the contents of the current volume, however, it is an enterprise that is both possible and profitable.

A final word. As VanPatten points out, we have indeed been doing something right. The fact that there are increasing numbers of LPDs with professional training in the field of applied linguistics and second language acquisition attests to that. The fact that increasing numbers of departments appear to feel the need for a professional LPD, frequently if not always, as a tenured or tenure-track appointment attests to that also. Finally, the fact that we, as a group, are able to reflect upon the role of research within our professional lives is further proof of our having done something right. The critical question now, of course, is not only how to continue “doing something right,” but, even more importantly, how to “do things better” for those who will follow us.

PART 1



**Research and Language  
Program Directors:  
The Relationship**



# RESEARCH DOMAINS AND LANGUAGE PROGRAM DIRECTION

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## Introduction

Perhaps no professional topic should be of greater concern to Language Program Directors (LPDs) than that of their role as scholars and researchers.<sup>1</sup> A number of questions suggest themselves, among which are: (1) what are the research domains that will best help an LPD set up a research agenda?, (2) how does the LPD integrate research into a professional position?, and (3) how does the LPD educate colleagues in literary studies such that they both understand and appreciate the research that the LPD does? None of these questions is more important than the others. They reflect problems faced by all tenure-track LPDs in departments dominated by literary and/or traditional linguistic studies. In the present article, I will address each of these questions in turn, offering at times descriptive observation of some points and critical discussion of others. I begin with research domains.

## Research Domains

Three lists serve as a point of departure for a discussion of research domains for LPDs. The first is the list of invited colloquia for the 1997 meeting of the American Association for Applied Linguistics (AAAL). The second and third are the lists of invited plenary talks for the 1997 and 1998 Second Language Research Forum (SLRF). Both of these are important research-oriented conferences.

***Invited Colloquia for the A AAL 1997***

1. Creole Linguistics and Social Responsibility
2. Incorporating Sociolinguistic Perspectives into SLA Theory
3. Language Policy and Planning: Sociopolitical Perspectives
4. Learning to Read in L2: A View from L1 Research
5. Sociocultural Theory and SLA: Confronting the Margins
6. The Nature of Communication in Foreign Language Classrooms

***Invited Plenary Sessions for SLRF 1997***

1. The Role of Attention in SLA: Point/Counterpoint
2. Features and Patterns in the Acquisition of Syntax
3. SLA and Theories of Mind from Four Perspectives

***Invited Plenary Sessions for SLRF 1998***

1. Exploring the “Interlanguage” of “Interlanguage Pragmatics”
2. Instructed SLA: A Cognitivist Account
3. Connectionist Models of Lexical Acquisition
4. Parametric Change in Language Development: Psycholinguistic and Historical Perspectives on SLA
5. (General) Nativism and Second Language Development

What is clear from these lists is that in order to be an applied linguist in the second language context (rather than in the first language context), one must contribute to some area of inquiry relevant to the acquisition and use of nonnative languages. The colloquia and plenaries are suggestive of the current multifaceted and interdisciplinary nature of second language acquisition (SLA), and, building on these presentations, we can outline the research that is presently moving the field of second language studies forward. There are five major areas of research, each in turn suggesting a number of sub-areas. (All citations are representative and are not intended to be exhaustive.)

1. **The psycholinguistics of language acquisition and language use.** Under the rubric of psycholinguistics we find a number of important lines of inquiry. One such line explores the link between comprehension and

language acquisition, for example, input processing and the derivation of intake (VanPatten 1996). Indeed, the nature of comprehension (whether aural or written) has yielded a great deal of research and continues to do so. On the horizon as a significant research area is processing capacity and its relationship to attainment and individual differences (Just and Carpenter 1992). Another line of psycholinguistic research explores the development of output processing and the relationship between production and the internalization of language (Swain 1985, 1998). Among the important constructs currently under investigation are speech-processing constraints (Pienemann 1998) and the development of fluency (Schmidt 1992).

**2. The nature of interlanguage and the processes that govern it.** In the domain of interlanguage scholarship, we find research on accommodation and restructuring (i.e., how the brain organizes language once appropriate linguistic data have been accommodated into the learner's developing system), hypothesis formation, and the roles of both first language and Universal Grammar (Eubank 1991; Schwartz and Sprouse 1996; Selinker 1992; Towell and Hawkins 1994). Although it is true that the field has long been dominated by sentence-level research, research on discourse-level phenomena is appearing, especially concerning the construction of narratives and how learners use tense to construct such narratives (Bardovi-Harlig 1992, 1994). Interlanguage is no longer limited to grammatical form and structure; the importance of communication has led many researchers to examine the nature of pragmatic competence in second language learners (Kasper 1997). In addition, vocabulary acquisition is receiving increased interest among researchers (Coady and Huckin 1997).

**3. The sociocultural dimensions of second language acquisition and use.** Researchers in sociocultural aspects of second language acquisition and use are interested in how interactional patterns are involved in language acquisition. They investigate the nature and structure of these interactional patterns as well as possible effects they have on the internalization of language (Gass 1997). Basic, but not exclusive of other questions, is the following: who speaks to whom, when, about what, and with what purpose (Musumeci 1997)? Recently, Vygotskian approaches to second language acquisition and use are proving to offer critical insight into second language acquisition using constructs such as language as mediation and inner speech (Lantolf and Appel 1994).



**4. The nature of input.** A continued area of empirical inquiry is the nature of input, especially the quality and quantity of input received by learners (Gass and Madden 1985; Larsen-Freeman and Long 1991, Chapter 5). There is no language acquisition without input and we have yet to understand fully the nature of input in language classes. Further, when one examines the literature on input available during language acquisition, one is struck by the paucity of research on languages other than English (Chaudron 1988, Chapter 3; Gass 1997). Just what does the speech of teachers in Spanish, French, and German classes, for example, look like?

**5. The effects of instruction.** Ever since the birth of contemporary SLA studies, scholars have reflected on and empirically investigated the role of formal instruction in the development of the learner's linguistic system. The focus has been on whether or not formal instruction (i.e., instruction in grammatical form) is necessary, beneficial, or detrimental to SLA. Underlying this research is the more fundamental question: Can instruction alter the processes by which learners internalize language? We are far from satisfactorily answering this question. Moreover, the research paradigms used to investigate the effects of formal instruction have changed over the years and will no doubt continue to change as the problem is viewed from new perspectives. The bibliography on this topic is extensive (Doughty and Williams 1998; Eckman et al. 1995; Ellis 1990; Lightbown, Spada, and White 1993; Pienemann 1987; VanPatten 1996).

The above list of topics is partial; individual differences, affective variables, and other researched topics could easily be added as secondary areas of inquiry. Absent from the list is pedagogy. Understood as the creation of language teaching materials and the concern for the day-to-day matters of the classroom, pedagogy is not a research-oriented field (though it can be theory-driven in the sense that many involved in pedagogical concerns look to current theory and research for insights into language teaching).

Of concern to the present discussion is an issue that led to the present volume. Several years ago, at a business meeting of the AAUSC, there was some concern about how untenured LPDs might put together a research agenda for tenure, a research agenda that was possible within the context of language program direction. This concern is puzzling; research agendas should be determined during doctoral education, not only during the thesis stage but throughout the graduate program. Ideally a dissertation should contribute to one or both of the following areas: (1) knowledge

advancement in a particular content domain and (2) research methodology. For a dissertation to do this, there are two fundamental questions that must be addressed when a dissertation proposal is defended. The first question is: Why conduct this research? (i.e., How is it important to the ongoing research of which it is presumably a part?) The purpose behind this question is to encourage novice researchers to understand how their particular work fits into a larger scholarly field. The second question to be addressed at the time of a proposal defense is: What do you do after this study is completed? The intent of this question is to get budding researchers to reflect on potential limitations of the study and to envision possible future studies. In asking—and answering—these questions, doctoral students should have thought about a research agenda before they move from graduate student status to independent academic.

## One Example of a Research Agenda

Although we would want graduate education to help prospective LPDs set up a research agenda, there remains the fact that some LPDs are currently grappling with establishing a research agenda after receiving the Ph.D. What follows, then, is a personal example of how a research agenda emerges. The example is positivistic in nature, that is, it involves a quantitative and experimental framework. This does not mean, however, that the same processes involved in the creation of a research agenda do not apply equally for both quantitative and qualitative frameworks.

In 1996 I published a book called *Input Processing and Grammar Instruction: Theory and Research*. The book presents a model of input processing, how this model interacts with models of the way in which Universal Grammar and L1 operate in SLA, and the predictions and explanation of phenomena in SLA that result from this model. In the book there are attempts to link input processing, as one aspect of SLA, to those processes used, for example, in the restructuring of the linguistic system. Also described in some detail is the nature of processing instruction, a type of form-focused instruction motivated by the model of input processing. Of relevance to the present discussion is Chapter 4 in which five research projects on processing instruction are presented. One of the purposes in writing this article was to allow the reader to see the development and implementation of a research agenda in this one area. Following are the studies and their foci of investigation (research questions) included in that chapter.

**VanPatten and Cadierno (1993).** How do processing instruction and more traditional grammar instruction compare? (Measurements: sentence-level interpretation and production tasks. Target item: Spanish object pronouns and word order.)

**Cadierno (1995).** Do the observed effects of processing instruction obtain with different target structures? (Measurements: sentence-level interpretation and production tasks. Target item: Spanish past tense.)

**Cheng (1995).** Do the observed effects of processing instruction obtain with different target structures? (Measurements: sentence- and discourse-level interpretation and production tasks. Target item: Spanish copular verbs.)

**VanPatten and Sanz (1995).** Do the observed effects of processing instruction obtain with different measurements? (Measurements: sentence-level, question-answer, and narrative production tasks in oral and written modes. Target item: Spanish object pronouns and word order.)

**VanPatten and Oikennon (1996).** Are the observed effects in the research on processing instruction due to explicit information or to actual changes in the developing linguistic system? (Measurements: sentence-level interpretation and production tasks. Target item: Spanish object pronouns and word order.)

What is of interest for the present discussion is just how the research agenda emerged. Under consideration first was the nature of the targeted structure. In any given experimentation such as those under discussion, the best way to get a clean study is to limit the investigation to one grammatical structure or form. However, this in turn limits the generalizations the researcher can make about the object of investigation (in this case, the effects of processing instruction). Would we find the same effects for morphologically-oriented grammatical form? What about syntactically-oriented structures? There are also lexico-semantic forms and grammatical devices. The point here is that no study is ever definitive with regard to the target linguistic item used as a variable and this limitation pointed (in VanPatten and Cadierno 1993) toward research that needed to be subsequently conducted (in Cadierno 1995 and in Cheng 1995).

A second consideration was the assessment tasks used. In the original study (VanPatten and Cadierno 1993), we used sentence-level, aural

interpretation tasks and sentence-level, written production tasks. Again, we were aware that these tasks limited the generalizability of the findings. Would the effects appear with more discourse-oriented tasks and would they appear if the tasks were all oral? Once again no study is ever definitive with regard to the measurement instruments used. For our research on processing instruction, this meant at least one if not two more studies in which the assessment task became an important variable of study (as in Cheng 1995 and VanPatten and Sanz 1995).

Under final consideration were more theoretical issues. In any study on grammar instruction or focus on form, one must consider whether observed effects are due to actual changes in the interlanguage or are due to monitoring, that is, the use of explicit information or knowledge when performing a task. To address this question, we replicated the original VanPatten and Cadierno study but separated explicit information from structured input activities and compared two experimental groups to a third that received processing instruction exactly as in the original study (i.e., VanPatten and Oikennon 1996).

By now one can see the thought processes that went into the studies on processing instruction. The bottom line in all of our considerations was generalizability: Are we comfortable generalizing our findings to all domains? The answer was that we could not be; the research agenda was born the minute we began the original study. One could rightly ask, why not just build all these considerations into the study from the very beginning? Why not conduct one large study and simply get it all over with? This is certainly possible, but not advisable. In the first place, the more variables loaded into a single study, the more it becomes likely that something will go wrong. Second, the statistical procedures can become complex with multiple analyses based on multiple variables. (In quantitative research, cleaner is always better.) Third, it may be physically impossible to do the *Big Study*. In our case, we would have needed ten different teaching packets and at least 40 sections of Spanish, plus the trained personnel to carry out the research. And finally, very often one needs to start with a smaller project just to see if an initial hypothesis is supported.

At this point, it is useful to list sample empirical studies, each suggesting a research agenda that has yet to be put into place. Based on the considerations and thought processes we have used in conducting research on processing instruction, it is clear that much more research is suggested by these initial studies.

**Scott (1989).** In this study, Scott attempted to compare explicit with implicit teaching. She compared two groups, one that received explicit explanation and practice on two structures and another that received exposure to the structures as they were embedded in aural input. Scott's results were not conclusive and a number of critical observations can be made about the study. Important follow-up studies include those in which the grammatical items are altered, the assessment instruments are altered, and the very nature of explicit and implicit teaching is altered. That Scott obtained inconclusive results itself suggests that this study needs to be replicated and refined.

**Wing (1987).** In this study, Wing found that teachers varied greatly in their use of the L2 in classrooms and that, on average, the L2 was used for communicative purposes about 10% of class time. In this case, follow-up studies could include altering the nature of the definition of communicative use as operationalized by Wing, using a much larger sample, and comparing secondary classes with university-level classes. Altering only the operationalization of communication so that it included a more careful examination of teacher talk could yield studies with different conclusions.

**VanPatten (1990).** In this oft-cited study, it was found that learners who were asked to explicitly attend to grammatical morphemes and, at the same time, listen to a passage for its content suffered considerable comprehension loss compared to two other groups (one that listened for content only and one that listened for content and simultaneously attended to a key word). The results suggest great difficulty in attending to form and meaning at the same time. What is needed as follow-up studies are those in which comprehensibility of the passage is altered. Is it possible that learners could attend to meaning and form at the same time if what they listened to was considerably easier to understand? Altering the stimulus from discourse-level to sentence-level might also affect the results. In addition, altering the stimulus from aural to written material could affect the outcome.

Too often researchers think their research is complete merely because "they got results." In the above examples, each researcher obtained results, but each study is limited by its generalizability.<sup>2</sup> A particular point should be made explicit. The emergence of a research agenda functions best when one begins with an articulated theory or framework. Theories and frameworks allow researchers to make predictions that can be tested. For

this reason, we see fewer one-shot studies coming from researchers working within Universal Grammar, Teachability and Learnability (now called Processability), Input Processing, the Competition Model, and other frameworks. It may very well be that at least some LPDs may have difficulty in developing a research agenda because they do not enter the profession with such a theoretical framework underlying their research. If this is the case, we must ask important questions about graduate education, questions that go beyond the scope of this article but questions that, nonetheless, should be addressed in other contexts.

## Integrating Research

Another concern regarding LPDs and research is the integration of their research agenda with language program direction. Pragmatically motivated, this is an interesting question. Research, however, is carried out because scholars are intellectually curious; researchers have questions that they would like to investigate. All of the research domains listed previously can be conducted within the context of a language program. The issue for every LPD should be: What questions interest me and why are those questions important to investigate? The point here is that a scholar's research agenda need not form part of language program direction; a research agenda should first and foremost be something that captures the interest and is worthy of investigation. If some LPDs are worried that their research is not relevant or too theoretical, we would do well to recall that research on language learning itself and the processes involved in it is never wasted. All research on language teaching implies an underlying theory of language acquisition—whether articulated or not—and researchers engaged in discussions about the nature of the processes involved in language acquisition and language use do produce significant work. Still relevant today are S. Pit Corder's remarks from over 30 years ago:

*We have been reminded recently of von Humboldt's statement that we cannot really teach language, we can only create conditions in which it will develop spontaneously in the mind in its own way. We shall never improve our ability to create such favourable conditions until we learn more about the way a learner learns and what his built-in syllabus is. (Corder 1967, as repeated in Corder 1981, pp. 12–13).*

A second implication of the concern for connecting research to the language program is that LPDs have no intellectual outlet outside of the language program. This indeed may be true and some of the issues related to this matter have been previously addressed in Lee and VanPatten (1991).<sup>3</sup> Two of the questions posed in this previous work are: What opportunities are there for LPDs to teach in an area of specialty? and What opportunities are there for LPDs to work with graduate students, not as teachers but as researchers? In major research institutions, significant research advances are made by those who have access to teach in their specialty. For this reason, at institutions where significant research is a part of the tenure profile, untenured faculty should teach graduate courses in their fields from the first year of coming on line. However, it is of course true that not all institutions offer graduate programs in which LPDs can teach specialty courses. I will explore this point in a different way as I discuss the relationship between applied linguistics and literature departments in the next section.

## **On the Education of Colleagues**

Many, if not most, colleagues in literary studies do not understand the contemporary field of applied linguistics, especially SLA. A perusal of the MLA job list, for example, suggests that at times the term second language acquisition is used synonymously with either language teaching or methodology, a synonymy never intended or suggested by those who founded contemporary SLA studies. Likewise, the term applied linguistics is often used in a restricted sense to refer to language teaching only. Since the vast majority of the advertised jobs are for LPDs, the conflation of the terms SLA and applied linguistics with language teaching is even more evident. Educated in an era in which applied linguistics literally meant applying linguistics to language teaching (i.e., applying structural linguistics to yield contrastive analysis), established literary scholars (the predominant authors of these ads) do not understand that applied linguistics has moved on to be a much broader and encompassing term that represents an active community of researchers and scholars. Interestingly, not one of the invited colloquia of the AAAL meeting or the invited plenaries of SLRF listed at the outset of this article deals with language teaching; all deal with language acquisition and/or language use. Colleagues in literary studies have not grasped this fact about applied linguistics. In many modern language departments across the country, then, the term second

language acquisition has been distorted and remade into some past image of methodology that no longer exists.

The issue, of course, is how to educate our literary colleagues. But is this the only solution and is it viable? In all institutions in which there are LPDs, our literary colleagues are busy with their own agenda. They, too, have research to conduct, classes to teach, dissertations to direct, meetings to attend, and so on. Their incentive to learn about another field is minimal. This is most strongly revealed by chairs and heads of such departments, chairs and heads who come from literary backgrounds. During tenure and promotion cases, for example, these department leaders are often bedeviled by whom to ask for outside letters of evaluation and they sometimes have difficulty in judging these letters once they come in. That they do not know who the scholars are, why they are the leading scholars in the field, and what their research suggests that not even the leadership of departments in which LPDs find themselves is conversant with the field of applied linguistics and SLA. Finally, we need to be honest about the sociopolitical nature of language departments; in many literary-oriented departments, applied linguistics and SLA are simply second-class areas of research and teaching.

Is it possible that in the late twentieth century we have two radically distinct fields thrust together within contemporary "language" departments, fields that have only as much in common as entomology and social psychology? Perhaps a more radical solution should be explored at this point. Rather than spend our time educating colleagues, it may be time to consider independence. Literary studies is literary studies and applied linguistics/SLA is applied linguistics/SLA. Instead of educating colleagues, our time may be better spent educating deans and administrators. The latter do not understand the professional problems that applied linguists/SLA researchers face in literary-oriented departments and are generally dependent on the information provided to them by the heads and chairs of these same departments. With deans and administrators, it is worth exploring the possibility of a healthy professional development of the field, in this case, the creation of independent units for applied linguistics within research and teaching institutions.

## Conclusion

In this article I have made a number of comments regarding LPDs and research agenda. I have discussed what I perceive to be the problems in



educating colleagues about our research, I have described various research domains for LPDs, and I have described the development of at least one research agenda to provide a sample framework for others. Along the way I have made some rather strong points about the status of applied linguistics/SLA and the research of LPDs and I would like to return to those comments here with an eye toward the future. First, graduate education in applied linguistics/SLA must be carefully examined to be sure that exiting Ph.D.s are equipped not only with knowledge about SLA and language teaching, but also with the research tools they will need. These tools include a framework or theory as a point of departure and a research agenda falling out of the theory. I repeat the important question that needs to be asked of every student getting ready to launch a doctoral thesis: Where do you go from here?

A second point is that we must seriously consider the issue of educating our colleagues. Is education in order? The future of applied linguistics/SLA may very well depend on its autonomy from literature departments. What is needed at this point in time is critical discussion of the benefits and drawbacks of such autonomy and to what extent independence is either necessary or potentially useful.

Although I have been rather critical at several points in this article, I would like to close with a positive observation. The presence of LPDs in language departments is a rather new phenomenon in the history of the U.S. academy. As one reads the MLA job list, it seems that each year there are an increasing number of calls for persons with expertise in SLA and applied linguistics. The description of a great number of these positions would never have appeared in the MLA job list some thirty years ago. Undoubtedly, we have done something right and both SLA and applied linguistics in general have emerged as viable fields in late-twentieth century university. This is a very positive thing indeed. We must now examine where we are and where we want to go as scholars and professionals.

## Notes

1. This is an expanded and revised version of a paper presented at the AAUSC session held at the annual ACTFL meeting in 1996. My thanks go to Carol Klee for her invitation to participate, to Sally Magnan who suggested that this article be submitted for the current volume, and to L. Kathy Heilenman and the reviewers for their useful comments. All errors in content are mine.

2. This is not to suggest that there are no examples of scholars with research agenda. Indeed there are, and a number of them are listed in the works cited.
3. In addition, see Dvorak (1986).

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# LANGUAGE PROGRAM DIRECTION AND THE MODERNIST AGENDA

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## Introduction

In the context of language program direction, the term “research” refers to a broad range of activities, from systematic pedagogical problem solving to participation in the most abstract theoretical discourses. Research fulfills many crucial roles: it informs understanding of language and learning, guides curricular decisions, supports innovation, and helps to determine when given practices should be either introduced or discontinued. In teacher training programs, research is used to acquaint new members of the profession with the received views of language learning. Often it is research that provides the springboard and rationale for fundamentally rethinking language education.

Research also plays a necessary role in the cultivation of the language program director’s scholarly career: as members of the academy, language program directors in tenured or tenure-line positions are expected to publish peer-reviewed research. The extent to which the character and subject of that research reflects their expertise within language education practice is to some extent a matter of personal choice. But selection of research specialization is also a matter of academic gamesmanship, politics, and ideology. The most valued research, the research most likely to garner widespread academic prestige, is that which produces maximally generalizable results pertaining to universally relevant questions: i.e., the research that is furthest removed from practical problem-solving. The hierarchy of values and research agendas within institutions overwhelmingly favors production of abstract knowledge above teaching. Teaching is often

viewed as mere transmission—versus joint creation—of knowledge. This research hierarchy is a well-acknowledged fundamental fact of life for program directors, one that frequently leads to a bad fit between practical work and research activity. Pointedly absent is any systemic, supporting connection between the realities of program direction and the research enterprise.

According to Toulmin (1990), the exclusive value assigned to certain forms of rational inquiry is embedded in the contemporary cultural construct of “modernity.” Toulmin points to the consensus among scholars that the Modern Age began in the mid-seventeenth century with the scientific revolution in physics and astronomy launched by Galileo Galilei and the innovative philosophical method elaborated by René Descartes. Twentieth-century writers have also agreed that the ushering in of the modern era was accompanied by an enlightened commitment to rationality in opposition to medieval superstition. It is generally acknowledged that this widespread change of mind was made possible by improved social, political, and economic conditions as well as by increased religious tolerance.

Toulmin provides a critical analysis of the received view of modernity, pointing out that it is based upon unfounded assumptions about the historical conditions under which abstract rationality achieved prominence at the expense of Renaissance humanism. Toulmin also questions the construction of knowledge that rigorously excludes forms of inquiry based in diverse, local practices, and calls for an effort to recover the aims of practical philosophy and to re-appropriate the pre-modern view of rationality as reasonable thought and conduct:

*For 16th century humanists, the central demand was that all of our thought and conduct be reasonable. On the one hand, this meant developing modesty about one’s capacities and self-awareness in one’s self-presentation. . . . On the other hand, it requires toleration of social, cultural and intellectual diversity. It was unreasonable to condemn out of hand people with institutions, customs, or ideas different from ours, as heretical, superstitious or barbarous. Instead, we should recognize that our own practices may look no less strange to others, and withhold judgment until we can ask how far those others reached their positions by honest, discriminating and critical reflection on their experience. (Toulmin 1990, p. 199)*

This essay examines some of the ways in which the construct of modernism, and the modernist research agenda itself, may limit the extent to which research can assist program directors in constructing reasonable, coherent professional outlooks and in making practical achievements.

## Research and the Construction of Coherence

Recommendations based on research tend to be fairly direct, as when, for example, researchers suggest concrete pedagogical implications of their work in terms of technique, participation format, teaching materials, or the like. These direct implications must be in harmony with the director's overall understanding of language education, formed indirectly via the integration of theoretical and practical problems. As is discussed below, on both a group and an individual level, a coherent view of the role of research is essential for it to be integrated into practice. Program directors need to look broadly at how research serves to build a coherent philosophical point of view and an informed professional outlook (van Lier 1996).

A coherent and highly developed teaching philosophy is an essential tool for organizing language instruction in principled ways. It is the basis on which decisions are made, innovations are attempted, and materials are evaluated. Only by developing a strong sense of coherence can program directors judge the relevance of research findings for their own settings. Like other professional practitioners, program directors develop competence during an ongoing process of relating various forms of expertise to their practice. In this essay I assume an iterative relationship between the development of theory and practice, one that allows the formation over time of dynamic "coherence systems" (Kingtoner 1997; Linde 1993) used by individuals to make sense in particular work environments.

The extended argument that follows rests on a further assumption about the traditional hierarchical superiority of research in relation to practice and what this arrangement means for achieving coherence in the practice of language teaching. In most universities, activity that counts as "research" is a separate and more highly valued activity than activity that counts as "teaching." Understanding the social and historical phenomenon of the separation of abstract theory from the domain of practical work—the rise of technical rationality (Schön 1983) as a component characteristic within modern philosophy—helps to make sense of certain basic tensions in both the language teaching profession and its professional discourse.



A critical reappraisal of the contributions of modernist thinking is crucial at this stage of the development of language teaching (Frawley 1993). It paves the way for us to look critically at the social history of otherwise unassailable concepts like “theory,” examining both how we came to structure our theorizing and what we gave up in the process. As we continue to lack such a perspective, it is difficult to see how the field of language teaching will surmount its own internal inconsistencies to find constructive ways of working on practical problems such as: developing teaching approaches that truly foster intercultural communicative competence, training teachers to work in situations where access to diversity makes language awareness ever more relevant; and demonstrating the pragmatic value of language competence in a competitive academic market.

To develop such approaches fully, the language teaching field must first determine a way to integrate the body of theory, research, and experience of sociocultural dimensions of language learning and use into practice. The construct of “communicative competence” (Savignon 1997) is an excellent case in point. Savignon’s model of this construct includes four components: grammatical, strategic, discourse, and sociolinguistic competence, each of which is considered essential to second language acquisition and use. Although the construct has been prominent in the professional literature for several decades, its pedagogical implications have never been fully realized. The practical application of the model is impeded in part because it does not harmonize with the inherent modernism of our research agenda: the four categories that are excluded from modernist philosophy, according to Toulmin (1990), are the oral/rhetorical, the particular, the local, and the timely—precisely those categories most needed to achieve a reasonable understanding of social and cultural contexts and their meanings for language learners.

In the meantime, an ever-widening rift has developed in the field of language teaching between two groups of researchers: those who continue in the modernist tradition, constructing their work with an aim to further systematic progress toward abstract generalities about cognition, and those researchers and practitioners who are concerned with enhancing practice via more applied and more systematic consideration of social and contextual issues. The first group is led by researchers in SLA with an ongoing commitment to nomothetic models of language acquisition (Ochsner 1979).<sup>1</sup> For these researchers, the relevance of findings for teaching is either dismissed as peripheral to the search for truth or is embedded

in the technical rationality that urges teachers to apply insights from research, albeit “with caution” (Hatch 1979). The second group includes writers and researchers proposing that language teaching has a right and a duty to generate its own forms of expertise that can be situated within the hermeneutic or the nomothetic scholarly tradition, provided they elucidate problems of direct significance for instruction (e.g., van Lier 1996).

The perceived conflict between these groups reflects a larger struggle that is both practical and ideological. At issue is a stance regarding consolidation of academic power and intellectual authority as much as “mere” philosophical notions. However, this conflict has serious implications for language teachers and program directors who must develop a productive relationship with the received knowledge of the field, particularly since the dominant, nomothetic modes of research, by their very nature, challenge the legitimacy of any form of interpretation by teachers. Ultimately the net effect of the ongoing intellectual turf war is the construction of one more impediment to the synthesis of a coherent view of language teaching, and this at a time when an increasingly complex and inclusive understanding of language learning is more necessary than ever.

## **Emergence of Sociocultural Theories in the Professional Discourse**

In a 1995 essay, Kramsch (1995a) provided a succinct and very apt summary of intellectual resources of language education when she outlined the characteristics of four prominent “discourses,” each bearing the indelible mark of its own social history and having its own signature vocabulary to describe central issues. These discourses are:

- (1) **The discourse of policy and public relations.** This discourse emphasizes “priorities,” “standards,” “accountability,” and “performance objectives.” Its ideology is primarily constructed around the opposition existing between foreign language education and all other academic fields, as they compete for national attention, priority, and funding.
- (2) **The discourse of research and theory,** wherein scholars studying cognitive processes of language acquisition tend to emphasize the importance of objective, scientific inquiry, empirical research, and progress toward greater knowledge of the truth about “interlanguage” and “acquisition processes.”

- (3) **The discourse of teachers and teacher educators** which highlights specific, practical “skills” and “outcomes,” and equally specific means of attaining them in the classroom.
- (4) **The discourse of the humanities and social sciences.** This “is the discourse of critical pedagogy, cultural criticism, and postmodern thought. It shows evidence of social and political consciousness—what Paolo Freire calls ‘conscientização.’ It stresses the importance of using theory to understand concrete realities.” (Kramsch, 1995a, p. 8)

In recent decades, language teaching in the U.S. has been highly influenced by policy-oriented discourses of the first type, especially those emanating from ACTFL’s efforts to promote its Proficiency Guidelines and National Standards. The full prestige of the term “research,” however, has usually been accorded to discourses of the second type, discourses that relate only peripherally to teaching, and then via the interpretive efforts of applied researchers whose interests overlap with those of teachers.

In the intervening years since the publication of Kramsch’s 1995a article, discourses most resembling the fourth kind have garnered new legitimacy, as witnessed by the simultaneous appearance of a number of publications informed by Vygotskian sociocultural theory (e.g., Brooks and Donato 1994; Hall 1995a, 1995b, 1997; Lantolf 1994; Lantolf and Appel 1994; Schinke-Llano 1993), discourse analysis (e.g., Carter and McCarthy 1995; McCarthy and Carter 1994), and language socialization in the classroom (e.g., He 1997; Poole 1992). Language teaching has clearly begun to take a serious interest in a variety of research agendas with foundations in the humanities.

Together with the subtle backfield discursive maneuvering and occasionally quotable skirmishes, there have also been several published frontal assaults on the ivory tower of modernist research, notably van Lier’s (1994) and Lantolf’s (1996) critiques of theory construction in second language acquisition (SLA) research, and Kramsch’s calls for redefinition of the fields’ boundaries (1995b). Firth and Wagner’s (1997) critique of SLA research calls for nothing less than enlargement of the “ontological and empirical parameters of the field” (p. 285). The authors further claim that SLA research is unbalanced in favor of cognitive and mentalistic approaches, with a resulting lack of attention to, and skewed perspective on, social and contextual features of language use. Firth and Wagner elucidate the static and idealized nature of generalized notions of “native speaking”

and “target” discourse implicit in research on communications strategies, input modification, and interlanguage development. They further suggest that these notions significantly undermine perception of the learner’s social identity and competence, while also oversimplifying the range of social influences on interaction.

At times the newly achieved legitimacy of sociocultural approaches is hotly contested, as for example in Long’s (1997) response to Firth and Wagner, in which, while agreeing that social and contextual features may be significant, the author argues that SLA research is really fundamentally about something else: internal representations of L2s (second languages) and the cognitive processes related to those representations. It is significant that, according to Long, context remains relatively unimportant to the functioning of those processes, and need not be accounted for in theories of second language acquisition:

*Social and affective factors, the L2 acquisition literature suggests, are important but relatively minor in their impact, in both naturalistic and classroom settings, and most current theories of and in SLA reflect that fact. . . . (p. 319)*

In the end, Long is thereby able to dismiss Firth and Wagner’s critique on the grounds that it is essentially irrelevant to the basic research agenda of SLA.

Thus we find that the participants in this rather typical debate characteristically do not write on the same topic or within the same discourse system. Firth and Wagner are working toward achieving legitimacy for approaches that problematize such intangible, unquantifiable features as “social identity,” and are arguing for the absence of boundaries between the social and the cognitive, which co-exist along a developmental continuum. Long, on the other hand, is defending a Cartesian mind/body separation that allows him to view cognition, an entirely separate matter from social life, as an internal representation made of “stuff” (Harré and Gilette 1994, p. 4) that has entered, or been put into the mind from a fundamentally insignificant, undifferentiated external reality. To understand the forces that drive this kind of fundamental miscommunication, and more broadly, the mixed welcome that the research community has extended to sociocultural theories, we must examine more profound social and historical changes of mind that are currently underway in philosophy and the social sciences.

## The Legacy of Modern Philosophy

Unbridgable gaps in forming coherence are frequently experienced by practitioners in the language education field. According to Toulmin (1990), a similar perception is shared by scholars in many fields today, as they jointly struggle to find theoretical support in solving practical issues; some of these discontinuities are a direct legacy of the structure of modernist thought. Toulmin cites numerous examples of fields where the limits of technical rationality have come into plain view during the second half of the twentieth century. In medicine, new techniques for prolonging bodily functions have raised value-laden questions about the quality of life itself, thus suggesting that “medical” problems have both technical and moral aspects. The bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki forced many nuclear physicists to abandon exclusive focus on value-free, abstract purity in order to become involved in political debate. Engineering projects, such as the construction of roads and dams, can no longer be justified exclusively on the basis of their utility and technical feasibility, but must instead respond to public concerns about ecological impact. Since the 1980s, the exaggerated artistic products of extreme rationalism, such as twelve-tone music and nonrepresentational painting, have been set aside in favor of identifiable harmonies and images. In all fields, Toulmin suggests, the late twentieth century has witnessed a struggle to humanize modernity. The main object of Toulmin’s volume is to challenge the received view of the history of Modern Philosophy. In particular, in framing the debate, Toulmin wishes to question the assumption that the Modern Age began abruptly in the seventeenth century, and that

*... the transition from medieval to modern modes of thought and practice rested on the adoption of rational methods in all serious fields of inquiry—by Galileo Galilei in physics, by René Descartes in epistemology . . . followed in political theory by Thomas Hobbes.*  
(p. 13)

Celebrations of modernism portray the rise of a utopian abstract rationality in pointed contrast and reaction to prevailing medieval superstition. In contrast, Toulmin’s account compares the social and political realities of seventeenth-century Europe with those faced in the century immediately preceding to argue convincingly that the dominance of abstract rationality arose in a social context characterized by *increased* religious intolerance, war, famine, and social upheaval. In Toulmin’s view,

modernism's self-definition as the inexorable march of human progress toward evident, demonstrable, and quantifiable enlightenment required a willing suspension of disbelief within a fiction that could only have been achieved via abstraction and isolation from the real, ongoing, and observable chaotic social processes. The achievements of modernist thought are not only milestones of human progress; they also reflect an overwhelming, almost desperate need for signs of certainty and intellectual clarity in the face of an alarmingly messy world.

Toulmin, in particular, examines precisely those features of Renaissance humanist insight that most troubled and inconvenienced Enlightenment thinkers in their quest for certitude. Such insights, though deliberately set aside by the founders of Modern Philosophy, have in fact never ceased to influence scholarly debates. There are, Toulmin states, four kinds of practical knowledge in which seventeenth-century philosophers "disclaimed any serious interest" (p. 30), and from which they pointedly distanced themselves in quite deliberate discourse shifts:

- (1) **From the oral to the written, from rhetoric to logic.** Before 1600, "no one questioned the right of rhetoric to stand alongside logic in the canon of philosophy" (p. 30). In post-Cartesian philosophy, however, public utterances before specific audiences were replaced by chains of written statements whose merits were judged based on their internal logic. Techniques of argumentation were set aside in favor of logical proofs, and questions about the social reception of particular theses were no longer germane: who said what to whom on which occasion was no longer a matter to be pondered in serious philosophical inquiry.
- (2) **From particular cases to general principles.** A second move replaced the study of particular occurrences and the methodology of the case study with a search for universals: scholars whose work concentrated on cases limited by particular conditions were now scorned. Since the mid-seventeenth century, Modern Philosophers have assumed that "the Good and the Just conform to timeless and universal principles" (p. 32). Modern moral philosophy would henceforth concern itself with comprehensive general principles of ethical theory rather than with particular moral discriminations.
- (3) **From concrete diversity to abstract axioms.** The third move shifted interest from a specific local character and its unique life and world view, to abstract, general ideas and principles which could be viewed

as overarching or superseding the particular. Sixteenth-century humanists had found abundant philosophical and scientific material in history, geography, and the particularities of local communities. Modern philosophers following Descartes, however, would “bring to light the general principles that hold in a given field of study—or, preferably, in all fields” (p. 33).

- (4) **From the transitory to the permanent.** A fourth and final move refocused concern from timely to “permanent structures underlying all the changeable phenomena of Nature” (p. 34). Renaissance scholars had viewed jurisprudence, rather than science, as the ideal model of rational inquiry, because it brought to light a full range of local, particular, timely concerns. From the 1630s on, however, “philosophers had no interest in factors that held good in different ways at different times. From Descartes’ time on, attention was focused on timeless principles that held good at all times equally . . .” (p. 34).

Taken together, these four changes of mind reflect a deep and enduring shift from practical to theory-driven philosophy. Much to the point here is that problem-solving in particular instances has never been the primary, driving concern of modern philosophy, which, together with modern science, formed “the twin founding pillars of modern thought” (Toulmin 1990, p. ix).

*Procedures for handling specific types of problems, or limited classes of cases, have never been a central concern of modern philosophy: rather, it has concentrated on abstract, timeless methods of deriving general solutions to universal problems. Thus, from the 1630s on, the focus of philosophical inquiries has ignored the particular, concrete, timely and local details of everyday human affairs; instead, it has shifted to a higher, stratospheric plane, on which nature and ethics conform to abstract, timeless, general and universal theories. (pp. 34–35)*

## The Construction of Coherence

Framed by the previous sections and returning now to the questions of professional practice with which we began, we must ask how language educators and language program directors (LPDs) construct their

approaches to practice, how the modernist research agenda impacts upon that process, and what proposals for research in support of practice can be advanced in light of these observations.

Recent studies of teacher development demonstrate how instructional competence is to a large extent a matter of personal appropriation and integration of expertise via practice (Kington 1997; Schön 1983; Wallace 1991). In contrast to approaches which view the work of teachers fundamentally as a matter of “applied science,” these studies show that, for individuals, the value and applicability of expert systems (i.e., theories and research findings) depend entirely upon the extent to which those individuals perceive their coherence. Only theories which have “coherence-potential” in relation to practice stand any chance of appropriation, and then only after they have been placed in dialectical relation to both the general and the quite local requirements of that practice. In an essay on the value of sociocultural theories for teachers, Levine writes:

*The fact is that teachers develop theories as much as theories develop them. Teachers initiate practice on the basis of their own experience—often against the theories of learning and development with which they came in contact during their training. When they find an account of learning development which matches closely and explains the precepts by which they were already working and which they were working towards, they enter into a dialectical relationship with these theories of learning. (Levine, 1993, pp. 203–204)*

The dynamic of professional development was captured in Schön’s (1983) reflective practice model, a model developed to account for the kinds of tacit “knowing-in-action” that are developed by professionals in such diverse fields as architecture and psychotherapy. Schön argues that practitioners frequently face unpredicted problems requiring immediate solution, and that the ability to respond successfully to precisely such unique and unpredictable exigencies of work is an excellent gauge of expertise. It is this kind of professional knowledge, “reflection-in-action,” that provides the ultimate measure of professional competence: “Our knowing is ordinarily tacit, implicit in our patterns of action and in our feel for the stuff with which we are dealing. It seems right to say that our knowing is *in our action*” (Schön, 1983, p. 49).

Reflective practice is the ongoing action that results from the ways in which individual professionals have integrated and continue to integrate



knowledge of expert systems and experience. Research by Kinginger (1997) looked into the forms that reflective practice can take when tapped at particular moments as written accounts of teaching philosophy. This study demonstrated that dynamic, personal coherence systems (Linde 1993) emerge from the dialectical relationship described by Levine (1993). They link expertise to practice in particular ways at particular times. It is important to observe that research and theory impact upon individual coherence systems; but it is no less important to recognize that these systems are constructed by individual practitioners in response to practical needs.

In the case of LPDs, the need for constructing coherence is particularly evident in light of the variation, complexity, and internal contradiction that typifies the post in many foreign language programs in the U.S. In comparison to many of their departmental colleagues, program directors often face a daunting array of disparate tasks: educating teachers, developing curricula, designing courses, teaching, researching, recruiting students, and advocating language learning both within a department and throughout its larger institution. In many cases, “language” professionals are also isolated within departments where many of their colleagues define their own research, teaching, and educational mission in its fundamental relation to literature, culture, or linguistics rather than to language. Applied linguists combine a unique, hybrid educational background with a practical bent to their research. LPDs, in fact, must spend a good deal of their time actively working to interpret and contextualize their work, their discipline, and their discourse for their colleagues, administrative supervisors, and students. They literally must translate their work for their colleagues.

In terms of the broader spectrum of applied linguistics activities beyond the institutional department, there is no obvious consensus, even among program directors, as to the form that a coherent, informed professional outlook should take. There exist a broad range of activities that can “count” as generating expertise relevant to practice, and since language teaching is characterized by an overall lack of clarity regarding governance (Patrikis 1995), any centripetal force (such as the ACTFL Standards project) rapidly loses momentum in a maze of particular, inertia-bound, local contingencies (Davis 1997). Most important, within the broadly defined systems of expertise struggling for pre-eminence, modernist discourses without foundations in practice, although questioned, still dominate SLA research.

## Modernism, Practice, and Coherence Systems

Given that program directors primarily concerned with the practices of language education must somehow be able to relate their personal sense of coherence to the available research in second language studies in order to appropriate or find any use whatsoever in the research, there are two basic problems. The first is establishing a balanced relationship between theory, research, and the practice of teaching. The second, a consequence of the first, is developing an understanding of the relationship between teaching and learning that would enable practitioners to account for the social and cultural features of context.

Where the object of SLA research is defined as a search for universal features of the human mind and for basic processes of acquisition that are assumed to operate regardless of their temporal or physical context (as, for example, suggested by Long's 1997 comments), much of the ongoing, current work in SLA theory is manifestly so fundamentally intertwined with the received assumptions and values of the modernist research agenda that it cannot solve either of the above problems. SLA research is not often grounded in practice; it generally participates in the assumption that higher ground can only be reached by abstracting away from local, particular, timely, and rhetorical considerations.

A telling feature of "the discourse of research and theory" (Kramsch 1995a) is the voice of authority in which its findings are related. Books for teachers are filled to the brim with references to a frequently anonymous collective construct called "research," which "demonstrates" and "proves." Questions regarding how findings from modernist research are received by teachers are rarely addressed, for two reasons. First, as noted by Toulmin (1990), for all researchers steeped in modern science, logic is assumed to be asocial in its content, entirely separate from the businesslike, utilitarian, and neutral rhetoric of clarity, brevity, and sincerity (Scollon and Scollon 1995) in which facts are to be delivered. All parties to the interaction are implicitly expected *a priori* to agree on a fundamental view of communication in which the particulars of content exist independently and must be evaluated independently without taking into account the form or social element in which they are introduced. According to this "conduit metaphor" (Reddy 1993) information is contained in texts and has only to be properly written and properly read in order to be properly received (Lantolf 1996).

The findings of modernist research are thus conceptualized as building blocks of progressive knowledge. They are not intended to be subject to interpretation, nor to integration within or adaptation to an individual's construction of coherence. In addition, research exists at a level that is supposed to assure its relative independence from the particulars of practice. The research enterprise is posited to be an independent, universal form of work that is hierarchically superior to teaching. In reality, myriad practical, social, and political exigencies affect and limit all such independence. For example, opportunities to affect disposition of research funding, dissemination of results, and potential exploitation of findings will clearly limit independence. The medium (or the messenger) frequently is the message.

If the modernist varieties of SLA research do little to assist practitioners, this also is due in part to the institutional values and hierarchy surrounding teaching, learning, and researching as activities. Looking into the historiography of science, however, we find that the modernist agenda is not rooted in practical wisdom; it values only those forms of rationality that abstract away from the local, timely, and particular features of practice.

Little wonder then that the applicability of SLA research has been increasingly at issue in the professional journals (e.g., Clarke 1994; Firth and Wagner 1997; van Lier 1994). As the institutional presence of modernist SLA grows, so does its distance from practice. On the one hand, SLA researchers rightly protest any imposition of practical goals that might interfere with the search for abstract truths. On the other hand, they fail to recognize the hermeneutic limitations inherent in conducting research in the modernist scientific tradition. In both instances, practitioners seeking daily guidance and self-improvement in the SLA literature find little that directly informs their work.

Equally limiting is the stance within SLA research toward social context in its relation to cognition. According to modernist scientific theory, with its reliance upon abstract universal laws unaffected by particular features of local context, social life can be theorized, but it is essentially irrelevant to the abstract life of the mind. One consequence of this stance is the separation of disciplines studying social life (i.e., anthropology and sociology) from disciplines representing cognitive development (i.e., psychology) as noted by Cole (1985). This distinction has resulted in the development of separate research agendas. Each field proceeds in

uninformed fashion as if the domain of the other were essentially unproblematic. Breen commented in 1985 on the impact of this separation in second language research: “Current language learning research tends to examine psychological change in an asocial way, or social events in a non-cognitive way” (p. 150). More than a decade later, much of the research on cognitive processes in SLA is still essentially asocial in its underlying assumptions, defining the social context as “a mere backdrop perhaps, for the main business of the learner’s relationship with target language data” (Breen 1996, p. 86).

Research on the social aspects of language learning, meanwhile, continues to refine descriptive method, but cannot really explain the development of sociocultural competences. The strict separation of the social from the cognitive means that while we have access to highly developed descriptions of the social and cultural dimensions of language use, these accounts have not achieved prominence in language teaching (Hall and Overfield, forthcoming). We still know very little about how these aspects of language use develop in classrooms.

For a variety of reasons, language educators need an account of sociocultural factors within and around language development that can be integrated within a coherent approach to practice. Such an account would allow us to devote serious attention to intercultural stances in language education (Kramsch 1993), to understand socialization practices in classrooms (Hall 1995b; Poole 1992), to teach—at long last—toward a “dynamic” and “context-specific” communicative competence (Savignon 1997, pp. 14–15). Instead of these perspectives, however, we are offered a SLA research establishment massively oriented in favor of cognitive and mentalistic accounts, wherein “language” is conflated with “grammar” (Lantolf 1996) and the focus is squarely and exclusively on the development of grammatical competence in the individual (Firth and Wagner 1997).

## Conclusion

Western scholarly discourse in the twentieth century has been marked by a shift of emphasis from modernizing humanity toward humanizing modernity. Parallel with other fields, language teaching has begun to critique the modernist agenda and its exclusive devotion to technical rationality. Modernist research alone, attending only to abstract, general, and timeless principles, provides inadequate support for reasonable practice attending to the social and contextual features of language use in the here

and now. Humanizing modernity for language teaching requires that teachers and program directors find a way to understand the limits of modernist research without rejecting outright the insights on language learning associated with the modernist agenda.

An important step toward meeting this challenge is to recognize that interpretation, in the hermeneutic scholarly tradition (Ochsner 1979), is inevitable and should be valued both within institutions and by the profession at large. As this article has argued, the modernist agenda works to impose severe constraints on how interpretation may take place as well as by whom. Findings are delivered in a form that denies the very possibility of critical reading by individuals outside the research community. Teachers and teacher educators alike, however, will inevitably interpret research findings with or without permission, contextualizing them according to the particulars of their experience in classrooms. Interpretations are personal, variable, and context-sensitive, which means that teacher educators are obliged to go beyond transmitting facts about language learning that may have been generated in circumstances external to their own programs. They must act as lead interpreters, showing how to achieve critical and dispassionate assessment of research findings and of their relevance for teaching.

Also at issue is the potential relevance of those avenues of inquiry that were set aside in order to further the modernist agenda, forms that are returning to prominence through the various practices of rhetorical analysis and qualitative research: case studies, ethnographic accounts, analyses of discourse, classroom-based social research, and the like. For such purposes as documenting the realities of classroom life, questioning the meaning of instructional practices, and understanding the social construction of identities and knowledges, these research methods present clear advantages over modernist methods and should be accorded the same legitimacy routinely assigned to experimental research.

LPDs should be at liberty to respect and employ diverse kinds of expertise, including both the results of experimental research and various forms of evidence gathered for practical reasons, at local sites, and at particular times. LPDs should *not* be unduly restricted in their scholarship by the constraints of a modernist agenda fundamentally and deliberately distanced from practical work. In defending their interpretive scholarship within institutions, LPDs must insist upon its inherent value as well as on the competence required to perform it. LPDs are often in a unique

position to construct useful interpretations of research based on their own work as well as on their familiarity with the range of different discourses and methods of research pertaining to language teaching. Ultimately, the extent to which LPDs achieve and demonstrate coherent approaches to practice should be the gauge by which the quality of their work is measured, rather than the constancy of their allegiance to any particular scholarly tradition.

## Note

1. In his 1979 "Poetics of Second Language Acquisition," Ochsner situates mainstream SLA within the "nomothetic" tradition in science. As Ochsner notes, the prefix "nomo" means "lawful". Nomothetic science, including social science, idealizes the experimental method, assuming that "there is one ordered, discoverable reality which causally obeys the Laws of Nature" (p. 53). Hermeneutic science, the "art of interpretation," is proposed as a reasonable alternative that might share prominence with nomothetic approaches. Hermeneutic inquiry assumes that reality does not have a single form, and consequently, that no single method can be adequate to answer all questions. Instead, "human events must be interpreted teleologically; that is according to their final ends" (p. 54).

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# THE RESEARCH-PEDAGOGY INTERFACE IN L2 ACQUISITION: IMPLICATIONS FOR LANGUAGE PROGRAM DIRECTORS

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## Introduction

Second Language (L2) teaching is as much art as science and, in some cases, it is difficult to distinguish one from the other. In this respect, most language teachers seem to follow their own implicit theories of language learning and teaching. For instance, Flynn (1991, p. 550)—from the perspective of a formal linguistic analysis of L2 development—states that she knows of “no language teacher who provides their students with nothing but unstructured conversation. Whether we acknowledge it or not, we utilize our own implicit theories about language and language learning when we teach.” Similarly, from a more general pedagogical perspective, Woods (1996) argues that *it is through the beliefs, assumptions and knowledge* of each teacher “that the teachers structure their perceptions of the curriculum and their decisions as to how to implement that curriculum, from overall organization of the units down to the specific classroom activities and verbalizations” (pp. 282–83). Implicit theories may sometimes contradict the teachers’ avowed explicit theoretical position on language teaching methodology. Hence, the existence of implicit theories of language learning among L2 teachers has been identified as a major factor in the implementation of curricular innovation (e.g., Flynn 1991; Woods 1996).

Curricular innovations can be effected by different means, such as selection of instructional materials and provision of course syllabi, as well

as the specific training of language teachers (e.g., teaching methodology courses). However, the potential influence of programmatic decisions on teachers' beliefs and behaviors will not necessarily change teachers' implicit theories of language learning and teaching. Prabhu (1992, p. 236) argues that the stability of teachers' beliefs will rarely be affected by innovation promoted from "outside:"

*suppose we put to teachers not just the operational aspect but the conceptual aspect as well—that is to say, our theory of how language learning comes about and how the procedures being recommended are likely to bring it about . . . We want teachers, in other words, to make our theory their own—to be as persuaded by the theory as we are. It is not difficult to see that this is a rather naive demand to make. It implies that people's concepts and beliefs are as open to a replacement as their behavioral routines . . . If a threat to one's routine is unsettling, a threat to one's belief can only be more unsettling.*

Therefore, it is possible to argue that teachers' beliefs and behaviors can only be affected by change "from within," or reflection in action (Schön 1983). According to Schön (1983, p. 68) the reflective practitioner "does not keep means and ends separate, but defines them interactively as he [sic] frames a problematic situation." More specifically, Woods (1996) argues that for any particular teaching situation "a teacher may not be consciously aware of all the factors he or she considered, but with further reflection this sense of awareness" will be increased. Similarly, van Lier (1996, p. 8) argues that with increased reflection and involvement in their analysis of a teaching situation, teachers will shift from problem-solving to problem-posing.

For the above-mentioned reasons, one of the most important functions of language program directors (LPDs) is to assess, encourage, and maintain an adequate level of professional involvement and growth among the teachers (or reflective practitioners) who compose language program staff. Even though it is quite common to see LPDs as producers of knowledge (in their role as researchers), or even as interpreters of knowledge (such as pedagogical decisions and policy issues), it is in the realm of teachers' professional development that the major impact of

LPDs may be assessed. This is not surprising given that—as argued above—teachers’ beliefs and assumptions play a major role in the language classroom. By acknowledging the existence of strongly held beliefs and assumptions about language pedagogy among teachers, acknowledging the lack of support for any single methodological approach to L2 teaching or a psycholinguistic model of L2 development (see below), and acknowledging the need to increase professional development through reflection-in-action, it is clearly useful to incorporate teachers’ perspective into the language programs and LPD’s research agendas. However, even though there seems to be agreement among most L2 scholars about the need to increase teachers’ level of professional involvement (see Flynn 1991 and Woods 1996 above), there is a major difference of perspective in terms of how to bring about that change: via a top-down or bottom-up approach.

A top-down approach to elicit language teaching awareness will rely on L2 research findings to stimulate reflection about teaching practices. For instance, Gass (1995) analyzed the type of SLA theory courses that might be included in teacher training programs. Gass stated that “teachers need to have the background to measure what is happening in the classroom against research findings” (p. 13). On the other hand, a bottom-up approach will concentrate primarily on analyzing teaching practices to stimulate a heuristic process of discovery. Freeman (1996) makes a similar distinction between first-order and second-order research: “[F]irst-order research examines phenomena in the world with the assumption that accurate objective accounts can be established through carefully assembling and triangulating data from different sources” (pp. 365–66). In contrast, second-order research “shifts the focus to examine participants’ perceptions of phenomena in the world” (pp. 365–66). The latter constitutes a hermeneutic approach whose focus is on “what people think and how they understand the worlds in which they live and act” (p. 360). It is possible to argue that the two perspectives of first- and second-order research—or top-down and bottom-up approaches—as means of effecting changes in pedagogical practices represent incompatible (or more accurately orthogonal) approaches. However, Gass (1995) states that teachers and researchers “need to work in tandem to determine how SLA findings can be evaluated and be made applicable to a classroom situation” (p. 16). I will call this the *research-pedagogy interface*. The success of such cooperation between researchers and teachers is dependent on two important

questions: What research findings will be considered relevant for L2 pedagogy?, and Who will determine what are relevant research findings for L2 pedagogy?<sup>1</sup>

In this article I will address these two questions through an analysis of the role of second language teachers in the development of research agendas (i.e., the drafting of explicit hypotheses of L2 development in the classroom setting) and an analysis of the potential areas of professional development that may help LPDs to achieve the objective of increased professional involvement (reflection-in-action) in classroom instruction. The structure of the article is as follows. First, I analyze the rationale for academic second language programs (from a researcher's perspective). Second, I discuss the role of both the communication-learning and planned-contingent paradoxes of adult second language learning for the adequate assessment of second language development in the classroom (elaboration of teachers' explicit hypotheses of language progress). Third, I describe the research-pedagogy interface. Finally, I analyze potential areas of curricular innovation that may increase the level of professional involvement of language teachers.

## **Second Language Acquisition in a Classroom Setting**

The goal of academic language programs rests on the assumption that instruction makes a difference in second language acquisition (e.g., Long 1983; Pienemann 1985). However, some cognitive (Krashen 1982) and related linguistic hypotheses (Schwartz 1993) have questioned the value of any type of pedagogical intervention. Instead, the provision of "comprehensible input" (Krashen) or "positive data" (Schwartz) has been argued to be sufficient to trigger acquisition or language development. A subsequent corollary of such strong positions is the claim that natural settings are qualitatively better than classroom environments, in that the former provide positive instead of negative evidence. For example, Schwartz (1993) argues that natural settings constitute the most advantageous language learning environment because "negative data do not figure prominently, if at all . . . in the input these L2ers receive" (p. 161). More important, the claim that developmental stages of language development in natural settings are representative of language development in the classroom environment has become increasingly prevalent in recent pedagogical

approaches (e.g., Cook 1998). In this section I will argue that, although where the learning takes place may not necessarily change the nature of language development among adult learners (e.g., Birdsong 1989; DeKeyser 1991; Schmidt and Frota 1986), it may nevertheless represent a major factor in the sequential development of the target language.<sup>2</sup>

Let us consider the case of verbal morphological markers of tense and aspect. Schwartz (1993) states that inflectional endings are among the most difficult features of nonnative languages for adult learners and have the “highest amount of variability and lowest degree of success” (p. 160). Schwartz speculates further that “the syntax (being built on the basis of primary linguistic data) continues to grow but the morphology seems to lag behind: learned linguistic knowledge, in this case inflectional verbal morphology, just cannot feed into the grammar” (p. 160). In fact, the development of verbal endings in a natural acquisition setting is a slow and gradual process that, in some cases, takes years, and, in others, merely leads to fossilization (Andersen 1986; Dietrich, Klein, and Noyau 1995; Perdue and Klein 1992; Sato 1988; Schumann 1987; Trévisse 1987). For instance, Klein, Dietrich, and Noyau (1995) argue that morpho-syntactic agreement among natural learners is a marginal phenomenon (the “basic variety”). In other words, communication demands (i.e., functional needs) may constitute a necessary but not sufficient condition to reach native-like mastery of the L2. On the other hand, some studies on academic learning show preliminary evidence that classroom instruction may have a strong effect on L2 development of verbal morphology (e.g., Bergström 1995, 1997; Buczowska and Weist 1991; Salaberry 1998). For instance, by their third semester of instruction, the learners from Bergström (1995) “show firm use of the *passé composé* not only with accomplishments and achievements but with all three dynamic verbs (activities, accomplishments, achievements) regardless of level” (p. 153). More importantly, Buczowska and Weist (1991) argue that tutored L2 learners do not follow the same developmental sequence as do L1 learners or untutored L2 learners in the acquisition of tense and aspect. They further argue that their data show that the strongest version of Piennemann’s teachability hypothesis should be revised: natural sequences only place constraints on pedagogical practices; they do not necessarily determine the specific developmental stages of tutored learners.

Why would instructed learning make a difference in the acquisition of inflectional morphology? The major distinction between natural and

classroom learners is that the latter are *more likely* to pay conscious attention to morphological endings and strive to incorporate them into their interlanguage. Several empirical studies of classroom learners seem to support this position (e.g. Harley 1989; Pienemann 1988, 1989; Schmidt 1990; Schmidt and Frota 1986).<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, even though classroom students have access to form-focused instruction, they are faced with the problem that the contextualized use of the target language is likely to be in relatively short supply in the classroom, but is essential for the processing of the discourse-based grammatical features (e.g., aspect) of the L2. I turn to this subject in the next section.

## Two Paradoxes of Adult Second Language Learning

Klein (1986) comments that “in some respects, communication and learning are at variance . . . communication is based on a set of stable rules which the learner, as speaker and listener, can follow. As a learner, however, he [sic] must not consider the rules he is following at the time to be stable: he must be prepared to control, to revise and even to drop them” (p. 147). In other words, the learner is faced with a *communication-learning paradox*. This paradox has been addressed differently by various researchers. For example, Krashen and Terrell (1983) refer to the conflicting purpose of communication versus learning goals as the great paradox of language teaching; that is, second languages are learned when we try to communicate and not when we try to learn. Interestingly enough, however, the data from the development of verbal morphology among natural learners show the opposite. An exclusive focus on communication in the target language may hinder learners’ focus of attention on particular (especially redundant) grammatical features of the target language (see the next section for an example as represented by tense-aspect marking). Swain (1992), for example, argues that communicative-based instruction should be supplemented with a focus on form-meaning relationships, by way of production, which pushes the syntactic use of the target language along with reflection based on authentic language samples and student-produced language.

Responding to the communication-learning paradox, recent pedagogical approaches to classroom instruction have included an emphasis on the provision of a focus on language form, language meaning, and the

interaction of language form and meaning. For instance, Long (1991) makes a distinction between focus on formS and focus on form. In the type of instruction which focuses on formS, attention is placed on the forms themselves (i.e., grammatical syllabus), whereas instruction with a focus on form “overtly draws students’ attention to linguistic elements *as they arise incidentally* in lessons whose overriding focus is on meaning, or communication” (p. 46, italics added). Along the same lines, Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994) state that in second language teaching “help should be *contingent*, meaning that it should be offered only when it is needed, and withdrawn as soon as the novice shows signs of control and ability to function independently” (p. 468).

Interestingly enough, the incidental and contingent focus on form advocated by the above-mentioned researchers leads to a second paradox. Contingent and incidental instruction will follow the teacher’s assessment of the learner’s needs at each stage of development, whereas (pre-) planned instruction (e.g., the sequential nature of a structural syllabus) relies on the notion of an idealized learner who may not be represented by any one student in particular (and even less so in the complex set of conditions of each particular interaction). This volatile condition of classroom interaction is compounded by the fact that not all learners will be at the same stage of development at any one time (e.g., Pienemann 1985). This is the planned-contingent instruction paradox. This paradox of instructed language learning may constitute a powerful argument against the use of pre-fabricated structural syllabi and encompassing psycholinguistic approaches to language instruction. In fact, Pienemann (1987) argues that “a ‘psycholinguistic method’ of L2 instruction is far out of reach. After the waves of direct method, language lab, etc., the teacher should be spared another ‘instant application’” (p. 165).

If neither an encompassing teaching methodology or a pre-digested grammatical syllabus are useful in the context of incidental and contingent L2 instruction, we may profitably turn our attention to the analysis of actual interaction in the language classroom. Even though it is essential for teachers to plan the different pedagogical activities (planned instruction) that will lead to the objective of language learning, language learning itself does not happen as planned, but rather through individualized contingent interaction (incidental). And, for contingent learning to happen, teachers must be active interpreters of classroom interaction (shifting from problem-solving to problem-posing). However, encouraging teachers to take a



more active role in the assessment of classroom learning (bottom-up approach) implies that teachers also take a more active role in the design of the research agenda. An example of this role is shared participation in programmatic decisions such as syllabus design or development of professional development activities. This more active role, in turn, will bring about increased professional development and growth.

In the following section I will examine the usually uneasy partnership of researchers and teachers in the development of research agendas. I will also identify potential points of contact between SLA research and pedagogy from the perspective outlined above.

## The Research-Pedagogy Interface

The main reason that prevents researchers from arriving at appropriate solutions for changes in second language pedagogy is simply that there is no agreed upon or well-developed second language acquisition theory. Prabhu (1992), for example, states that there is a “belief that the curriculum represents a predetermination of the learner’s development, both at particular points and over a stretch of time (i.e., the course); and this in turn implies that the curriculum developer has far better access than the teacher to the learner’s mental development” (p. 226). However, this is only an assumption since experts do not have a clear idea of the psycholinguistic processes that underlie second language acquisition (e.g., Pienemann 1988, 1989). To make matters worse, the teacher is responsible for carrying out a curriculum based on hypothesized—but not corroborated—sequences of acquisition: “[T]he curriculum developer *attempts to predict* or decide in advance the process of development before it takes place, while the teacher has *difficulty perceiving it as it happens*” (Prabhu 1992, p. 226, italics added). As a result, neither curriculum developer nor language teacher will make significant progress towards their common endeavor unless a better integration of their efforts is devised (see also Gass 1995).

Unfortunately, however, it seems that both researchers and teachers tend to distrust each other’s motives. For instance, van Lier (1996) explains that “some SLA researchers explicitly distance themselves from pedagogy, perhaps in order to bolster their theoretical stature . . . such theories, and the research conducted in their support, cannot be the driving force behind pedagogical practice, however crucial they may otherwise be”

(p. 27). Similarly, Newmeyer and Weinberger (1988) claim that there is an unhealthy relationship between pedagogy and acquisition (or research). The difficulty in establishing an adequate research-pedagogy interface has been highlighted in a recent series of exchanges on the electronic list SLART-L (Second Language Acquisition Research and Teaching List). The concern of some SLA researchers about the inclusion of the word “teaching” in the call for papers for the 1996 student conference, SLRF (Second Language Research Forum), generated an intense debate.<sup>4</sup> In the midst of the debate, an e-mail exchange from Seliger (October 19, 1995) pointed out that the focus of SLRF “has always been on second language acquisition with concerns about teaching only as they impinge on the acquisition process. Be careful about shutting doors too prematurely without consideration of what might be left outside.” Along the same lines, what may be neglected by leaving teaching aside will be the cognitive process of second language acquisition as it happens in particular learning settings. Despite the fact that there may exist a common process of acquisition underlying different social contexts, such as academic and natural settings, the analysis of adult language learning cannot be properly assessed without addressing the potential effect of such contextual factors—as there are theoretical and empirical data that, arguably, show such differences in adult L2 acquisition (e.g., Bley-Vroman 1989; Schachter 1988; Schmidt 1990; see previous comments).

It is possible to argue that SLA researchers and SLA teachers have different and incompatible goals (as explicitly claimed by Eubank 1996). For instance, in the area of language testing, Pienemann, Johnston, and Meisel (1993) point out that linguistic profiling (establishing profiles of learners’ L2 development) and language proficiency approaches (establishing linguistic proficiency thresholds) have different objectives: research and pedagogy, respectively. Pienemann et al (1993) state that:

*The opposition between proficiency-oriented approaches to language testing and linguistic profiling exists at the level of construct validity. At the practical level, however, these approaches are designed for very different purposes . . . most proficiency-oriented approaches are designed to capture the global picture of a person’s ability in a language. Approaches to profiling are currently unlikely to be able to achieve that objective. (p. 500)*

However, I believe that there are many points of contact between these two approaches to linguistic development. For example, even though the development of morphological means to convey tense and aspect marking in the Romance languages remains a controversial research topic (Liskin-Gasparro 1997; Salaberry forthcoming; Shirai 1997), the distinction between discursive and syntactic means to signal tense-aspect is hardly controversial in the research literature. Discursive means to convey tense and aspect attested in the literature include calendric reference, implicit reference (temporal reference inferred from context), interlocutor scaffolding, serialization (in which the sequence of utterances reflects the actual temporal order of events), and adverbials (see Dietrich, Klein, and Noyau 1995; Sato 1990; Schumann 1987; Trévisé 1987, etc.). Discursive means allow learners to achieve functional goals without necessarily controlling formal means for conveying tense-aspect markers. For this reason, it is important that the appropriate distinction between functional (discursive) and formal (morphological) means to convey tense and aspect be kept separate in the assessment of “global functions” versus “grammatical accuracy” in proficiency-oriented approaches. On the other hand, the insights of experienced ACTFL proficiency testers become more an asset than a liability for the development of a SLA research agenda. For this reason, Pienemann (1987) cautions that “applying L2 research is not just writing acquisitional orders into new curricula” (p. 164).

In sum, it is likely that both researchers and teachers may find points of contact in their respective endeavors. A major arena where this interaction is played out is that of curricular innovations insofar as such innovations tend to lie at the intersection of research and practice. In the next section I address possible ways in which LPDs may help bridge the gap between research and pedagogical orientations for the assessment and enhancement of L2 learning.

## **Managing Pedagogical Practice**

### **General Approaches to Curricular Innovation**

Markee (1997) discusses five approaches for effecting curricular innovation in language programs. Three of these describe the wide array of tasks that LPDs normally carry out as part of their management duties, namely, the research, development, and diffusion model, the social interaction

model, and the problem-solving model. The *research, development, and diffusion model* constitutes the rational approach to long-term language program planning: articulating the “vision” of the program, conducting research on classroom learning, and implementing the changes necessary to achieve the avowed vision. The *social interaction model* “seeks to explain what motivates clients’ [here, teachers] actual adoption behaviors, not how to manage change per se” (Markee 1997, p. 62). This approach focuses on communication, on being in touch with what teachers interpret as their mission, and on ways to achieve that mission. From this perspective, most meetings and social activities (in fact, information exchange in general) become essential for the successful achievement of objectives established by the language program. For instance, the publication of teachers’ classroom experiences in the form of personal stories in the department newsletter (or similar information exchange media) encourages communication among the teaching staff. This also constitutes an indirect way for teachers to obtain confirmation of the achievement of mission objectives such as success in the implementation of a new teaching technique. Finally, the *problem-solving approach* has become more prevalent in recent years as the pendulum of language teaching methodology has swung from general methodological approaches to local level decisions based on teachers’ reflection and action (e.g., Freeman and Richards 1996; Prabhu 1992; Richards and Lockhart 1996; van Lier 1988, 1996; Woods 1996). As pointed out by Markee (1997), “this approach assumes that peoples’ actions and beliefs are governed by their social values” (p. 67).

The social interaction model and the problem-solving approach are less prestigious than the research, development, and diffusion model due to scope of generalizability and type of pedagogical analysis. First, as a result of a restricted focus on the particular social dynamics of the language program, the social interaction model and the problem-solving approach tend to generate local applications instead of applications general to language program planning. Second, they focus on a dialectic process of language teaching analysis (reflection-in-action) as opposed to a product-oriented approach (application of research findings). On the other hand, Markee points out that there are important weaknesses in the research, development, and diffusion model as well, namely, establishment of unachievable objectives, disregard for idiosyncratic goals of individuals, and the establishment of frequent policy changes to correct the mismatch in

implementation provoked by the first two shortcomings. In short, the research, development, and diffusion model may be deficient if the major agents of change—the teachers—do not become stakeholders in the process of language program planning.

I propose that the synergistic integration of all three models described above may be the appropriate foundation for increasing professional involvement and growth among language teachers (and this, as I have argued, is an essential prerequisite for increasing incidental, contingent learning in the classroom). I will describe three major factors that make such a proposal plausible. First, in principle, there is no reason to do without research-oriented language program planning as long as the diffusion phase of this approach (communication with language teachers) is implemented as an integral component of the entire process of development. The appropriate diffusion of program goals will, in turn, ensure that language teachers will be able to voice their concerns and to share their ideas on the *what*, *how*, and *when* of the language program research agenda. Second, teachers have as good a—if not a better—sense of what is pedagogically useful than do L2 researchers. In this respect, Prabhu (1992) expressed doubt “that specialists in language pedagogy have any better source for their theories than their own notions and intuitions, though of course *they are more highly skilled in articulating them and supporting them in academically recognized ways*” (p. 240 [emphasis added]). Consequently, teachers may become vital players in the area of pedagogically-oriented research through action research (e.g., Richards and Lockhart 1996). Finally, the inclusion of action research as an efficient and inclusive means to effect changes in a language program will help turn the classroom “from a field of activity into a subject of inquiry” (van Lier 1996, p. 31). The consequences of such inclusive and empowering means of conducting research in a language program may incorporate “a dimension of research in one’s teaching” and become “one way to transform the notion of professionalism from an authority-based one into a research-based one” (van Lier 1996, p. 28). In sum, the increased reliance on teachers’ contributions and involvement will necessarily lead to the vital component of reflection-in-action (Schön 1983). Were this to happen, the process of teaching would change substantially and move from a process of problem-solving to one of problem-posing (van Lier 1996). At this juncture, it is important to analyze the potential sources of innovation in a language program that may lead to a heightened sense of reflection about teaching practices.

## Primary and Secondary Sources of Innovation

Markee (1997) distinguishes two variations of curricular innovation in a language program: primary and secondary sources. Among the primary sources of innovation we identify the triad familiar to all LPDs in charge of teacher education courses and language program administration: (i) pedagogical values (learning/teaching approach), (ii) methodological skills (classroom management techniques, lesson planning, etc.), and (iii) teaching materials (textbooks, ancillary materials, resource libraries, etc.). As secondary sources Markee lists academic (e.g., courses on language teaching) and administrative (e.g., staff meetings, orientation sessions, e-mail groups) means of innovation. There are several ways in which the principled implementation of both primary and secondary sources of innovation may shift the nature of teaching from passive administration of language methods and syllabi to reflective action (see the previous section). The latter is congruent with the type of incidental and contingent learning described earlier in this article.

In general, the *pedagogical approach* of a language program may be specified directly (for example, in a mission statement) or indirectly (for example, feedback on classroom observation). For instance, Davies and Turner (1993) describe an evaluation instrument for classroom observation based on Omaggio's (1986) teaching-for-proficiency proposal. Davies and Turner argue that proficiency is an organizing principle, not a methodology; thus, teachers are responsible for devising ways such as syllabus design and classroom tasks to achieve the objective of proficiency. In turn, the evaluation of classroom teaching "serves as a teaching device that specifies which behaviors contribute to effective teaching in the proficiency-oriented classroom" (p. 207). More importantly, Davies and Turner state that "after the reconstruction of the class, the next steps are to analyze and interpret the data, and then to draw conclusions, *with the supervisor and the TA both contributing to the process*" (p. 210 [emphasis added]). Similarly, the analysis of teaching practice as an academic subject detached from practice, as is the case of methodology courses or orientation sessions conducted without a concurrent teaching practicum, raises a serious issue of validity. For instance, Woods (1996) argues that "learning how to make decisions (and produce the lesson plans which embody those decisions) *in isolation . . . is analogous to the language learning activity of practicing sentences out of context in order to learn the*

*syntax*” (p. 274 [emphasis added]). Woods contends that, in this way, the validity of the task as well as the transfer of expertise from lesson-planning to actual teaching is diminished. Along the same lines, Freeman (1996) states that:

*When research enters the domain of meaning, hermeneutic analysis, and interpretation, the alignment of traditional categories may no longer serve. There is a need to view validity in such research as a judgment that links the participants, the researchers, and the wider community that uses the research. (p. 373)*

Reflective practitioners must also be aware of the nature of classroom dynamics within the context of lesson plans, testing procedures, and textbook materials. For instance, Prabhu (1992) makes a distinction between the pedagogical and social dimensions of the classroom environment with respect to *lesson planning*. From the pedagogical perspective, the language lesson can be regarded as a curricular unit or as the implementation of a method of teaching. From the social perspective, a lesson can be viewed as the conventionalized roles and routines of a social event, or as the interplay of personalities during human interaction. Prabhu’s identification of the social components of the lesson plan underlines the contingent nature of classroom interaction. Similarly, in the area of *proficiency testing*, Kramsch (1986) argues that the proficiency movement (ACTFL Guidelines) has placed the focus on behavioral functions. However, it is not enough to be able to perform a particular function in the language such as making a request; it is also necessary to consider that same function as an *interactional ability*, as a much broader notion within the organization of thoughts and actions (see the distinction between functional and formal means discussed earlier). Furthermore, Kramsch underlines the importance of the notion of a dynamic view of content that constitutes a continuum from context-embedded to context-reduced. Hence, speakers are in situations where they have to make decisions in terms of the degree of discourse elaboration, a concept that entails *interactional competence* (critical and explicit reflections on discourse parameters based on the context available).

Finally, in the area of *teaching materials*, Carter and McCarthy (1995) argue that traditional textbooks are based on written grammars and that the latter “exclude features that occur widely in the conversation of native speakers” (p. 142). For this reason, Carter and McCarthy suggest that instruction based on the traditional structure of presentation, practice, and

production may be profitably replaced by the sequence of illustration, interaction, and induction “where illustration stands for looking at real data . . . interaction stands for discussion, sharing of opinions and observations, and induction stands for making one’s own, or the group’s rule for a particular feature, a rule which will be refined and honed as more and more data is [sic] encountered” (p. 155). In sum, the movement from implicit to explicit theories of language learning and teaching through reflection in action brings about a necessary research component to all teaching-related activities.

Notwithstanding the importance of primary sources in the service of curricular innovation, I believe that the adequate use of secondary sources is also essential for achieving the objectives principally addressed by the appropriate implementation of primary sources. The importance of the secondary sources is implicit in the relevance of the social interaction model (described above) for the attainment of social cohesion and the synthesis of mission objectives in a more distributed fashion (i.e., avoidance of a top-down model). For instance, the following professional development activities may become instrumental for the development of reflective practitioners among teachers: book club meetings, administrative and academic support for the development of teaching portfolios, maintenance of a teaching resource library, organization of professional development workshops, and increased information exchange through electronic and paper newsletters. Such activities may lead to increased reflection on pedagogical values (e.g., book club meetings, teaching portfolios), increased reflection on actual teaching practice (e.g., teaching portfolios, access to resource library), increased social cohesion as common goals are identified and assessed (e.g., newsletters), as well as increased creativity and commitment to the profession (e.g., teaching portfolios, access to resource library).

## Conclusion

In this article I have presented an argument in favor of prioritizing the goal of teachers’ professional development as the most efficient and effective way of achieving research and pedagogical objectives in second language programs. Following the work of Prabhu, Schön, van Lier, Woods, and others I have proposed that teachers can only become professional educators if their implicit theories of language teaching are brought into focus as reflective teaching through various professional development activities such as Markee’s primary and secondary sources of innovation.



The notion of reflective teaching includes, by definition, a research component that leads to the development of a research agenda that may or may not coincide with the research objectives of SLA theoretical researchers. I term this the research-pedagogy interface.

I have proposed that the nature of an academic language program must be justified in terms of explicit learning objectives. In this respect, I claim that the relevance of particular perspectives on language development will necessarily be subject to intellectual debate and evolution (e.g., the prevalence of natural settings over classroom settings in the identification of developmental stages of acquisition). Thus, in the same way that researchers put forth specific research hypotheses, teachers need to identify and explicitly articulate their own hypotheses of language development. I have subsequently argued that the existence of two language learning paradoxes in instructed second language learning (the communication-learning and planned-contingent paradoxes) further justify the involvement of language teachers in the process of development of a research agenda for an academic language program. Finally, I have identified the framework within which language teachers may become active participants in the management of pedagogical practices, including the draft of research objectives of the language program. The strategic position of LPDs in helping to bridge the gap between researchers and teachers is fundamental for the successful achievement of such a collaborative framework. Most important, the professional involvement of language teachers in research activities (reflective action through action research) will eventually lead to increased quality of language teaching.

## Notes

1. For the purpose of this article the definitions of researcher and teacher are context-situated notions. That is to say, researchers can be regarded as teachers and teachers can be regarded as researchers depending on the particular functions they fulfill at different times with respect to the pedagogical process.
2. For instance, Huebner (1995) presents data showing that study abroad students do not seem to approach the task of language learning in any way differently than they approach regular classroom instruction. Similarly, DeKeyser (1991) shows that most students enrolled in programs abroad merely transfer the same learning strategies previously seen in classroom instruction.

3. For instance, Schmidt (1990, p. 143) lists the factors that he claims influence noticing grammatical features of the target language: (i) task demands, (ii) frequency, (iii) saliency of the feature, (iv) individual skills and strategies, and (v) expectations created by the native language. Similarly, Harley (1989) suggests that the pedagogical conditions that may have a key role in acquisition are: (i) increased frequency and saliency in the input, (ii) appeal to students' metalinguistic awareness, (iii) greater and more focused opportunities for output, and (iv) goal-directed interaction in small group contexts.
4. It is important to mention that the debate included an explicit focus on the issue of who controls the agenda of the conference (e.g., drafting of a constitution, election of a Board). Traditionally, SLRF has been an itinerant conference organized by students, whose host institution changes every year. It seems to me that the fact that no institution—or any non-student group for that matter—may claim ownership of the SLRF agenda provides a necessary and sufficient control against the imposition of specific research agendas.

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# APPLICATIONS OF SOCIOLINGUISTIC AND SOCIOCULTURAL RESEARCH TO THE FRENCH LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

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## Introduction

All foreign language teachers are faced with the fact that it is virtually impossible to present the entire target language (TL) to their students. No matter how many hours a language class meets each week, there are only so many aspects of the TL that a teacher has the time to foreground. Therefore, no matter what acquisitional theory or theories inform one's teaching methodology, all language teachers serve as TL filters for their language students, first, by deciding which elements to include and which to exclude in their class and, second, by deciding how to contextualize the elements that they have chosen to include in their class. This decision-making process, then, is the foundation upon which foreign language textbooks, programs, and even specific classes are built. How are these decisions of inclusion and contextualization typically made? And more importantly, how should they be made? This article will argue the importance of sociolinguistic and sociocultural research in this decision-making process. It will be demonstrated that such empirical research can help us to understand the many ways in which language form, function, and social use are interconnected and, in so doing, help us to determine which types of forms and structures to include in a language class and how best to contextualize them.

## The Importance of Sociolinguistic Research to Language Teaching

When we interact with another person, our ability to appropriately convey our intentions and understand the intentions of the other depends, in large part, on the degree to which we both share the same expectations with respect to how that communicative act will unfold. Which linguistic forms will one hear? How are different expressions to be interpreted in a particular exchange? What constitutes conventional behavior (standardized form-function relationships in a given context), and what might fall outside of the range of conventional behavior and be subject to marked (negatively or positively) social evaluation? In order to acquire a foreign language, students must understand that language is inextricably bound to context, that there are conventional associations between linguistic forms, functions, and genres that underlie all of our communicative exchanges. In order to do this, language teachers must:

1. highlight for students patterns of target language use, prioritizing structures by their frequency and productivity in the language and linking structures with particular functions and social contexts;
2. help students to develop hypothesis-formation skills (regarding target language structures and their functions) that will allow them to continue learning beyond the language classroom; and
3. show students the importance of examining their own language norms in order to understand how to go beyond their native language and culture and acquire new norms of communication.

But how can a language teacher or textbook author achieve these goals? Certainly using one's intuitions about the structural nature of the target language, its use in different social contexts, and the foreign language acquisition process is one possible route to take. Whether a native or non-native speaker, each language teacher comes to the classroom with invaluable personal experiences that can be used to help students to discover patterns of form and contextualized use. Unfortunately, numerous research studies have demonstrated that intuitions about language use are often far removed from actual language use (Kennedy 1987; Labov 1972;



Roulet 1974). And even if one's intuitions about actual language use were accurate, there is not one language teacher or team of textbook authors who has complete knowledge of all of the structural, functional, and social patterns of the TL. From the perspective of an individual tree or even clump of trees, it is impossible to see the nature of the forest. In order to see the nature of the forest, one needs to examine many individual trees and the relationships between and among individual trees and clumps of trees. It is here that empirical research is invaluable.

In order to see general patterns of linguistic structure and contextualized TL use, one must analyze the TL as it is used by native speakers in a wide variety of contexts. Even if one's goal is to focus on only the "standard language," the variety of spoken and written genres that must be considered is noteworthy. If one looks at the written language—literary works, certain types of popular non-literary works, journalistic speech, formal correspondence, folklore and fairy tales, travel guides—all are genres that one could consider representative of the "standard language." As for the spoken language, formal interviews and presentations, news broadcasts, conversations among educated native speakers in a semi-formal context, and commonly occurring speech acts (for example, greetings, complimenting, inviting norms) could also all be considered representative of the "standard language." Consequently, in order to understand which structures are most frequent and most productive in the TL and how these structures are linked to particular functions and discourse contexts, one would need to both quantitatively and qualitatively analyze the language used in these spoken and written genres.

Quantitative studies of language within and across genres and in various interactive speech contexts have increased dramatically over the past several years, aided more recently by technological advancements in taping procedures and computerized data manipulation programs as well as by theoretical advances in examining discourse in general and speech acts in particular. This article will examine the results of some of these sociolinguistic and sociocultural research studies and will demonstrate why such research is essential to consider when designing foreign language teaching materials. The focus here will be on studies conducted on French, although, in some cases, similar work has been done on other languages (for example, English and Hebrew: Blum-Kulka 1983; Spanish: Glisan and Drescher 1993).

## Linking Form, Function, and Context in French

A recent study (Di Vito 1997) of five grammatical structures in a large spoken and written French database indicates numerous form-function-genre patterns that have clear implications for French language teaching. The subjunctive, relative constructions, the narrative past tenses (*passé composé*, *imparfait*, and *passé simple*), interrogative structures, and object pronouns were examined in a corpus of 53,265 independent, subordinate, and relative clauses. The written corpus included eighteenth-twentieth century literary works, folklore and fairy tales, detective novels, travel guides, official correspondence, and magazines. The spoken corpus included academic conferences, news broadcasts, televised interviews, and conversations. A summary of the patterns found for each structure in the spoken and written database as well as their relevance for French language teaching will be outlined in the following section.

### The Subjunctive

What French language teacher has not spent long hours deciding how to present the forms and uses of the subjunctive? Most intermediate-level, and even some beginning-level, textbooks devote numerous pages to the many irregular subjunctive verb forms and provide long lists of contexts in which the subjunctive may be used. These lists are typically followed by elaborate drill and practice-type exercises whose goal is to help students assimilate these forms and contexts. But are all of these subjunctive forms and contexts of use equally frequent in native speaker discourse? To what extent does the traditional exhaustive presentation of the many subjunctive forms, tenses, and usage categories help students to grasp contemporary native speaker use of the subjunctive?

Results of the quantitative study of 53,265-clause database clearly indicate that not all subjunctive forms or contexts are equally common in the spoken and written French database. First, it should be noted that only 1% of all spoken clauses and only 2% of all written clauses in this large database contain examples of marked subjunctive forms. (For many verb types, the subjunctive and indicative verb forms are the same. For example, the first-person subjunctive forms [*je, tu, il*] and third-person plural subjunctive form [*ils*] of *-er* verbs are the same as the corresponding indicative forms.) In addition, in the spoken language, there are only four marked subjunctive forms used with any notable frequency: /*swa*/ (*être*),

/pʁis/ (*pouvoir*), /fas/ (*faire*), and /E/ (*avoir*). In both the spoken and the written language, the first and third person singular and third person plural forms (*je, il,* and *ils*) make up 90% of all subjunctive forms. And in both modes, the present subjunctive predominates. More than 90% of all subjunctives in the spoken language and a great majority of all subjunctives in magazines, plays, and official correspondence are in the present subjunctive. In literary prose, on the other hand, the imperfect subjunctive is commonplace. In the twentieth-century texts examined, present tense subjunctives account for 43% of all subjunctive forms and imperfect subjunctive forms account for a surprising 40% of all subjunctive forms.

These data clearly demonstrate the need to focus on particular forms and particular tenses of the subjunctive when building spoken or written proficiency in French. While certainly the entire subjunctive system could be presented to students, the overwhelming frequency of the forms /E/, /swa/, /pʁis/, and /fas/ in the spoken language suggests that aural and oral exercises should primarily highlight these forms. On the other hand, the common use of both present and past subjunctive forms across written language contexts justifies recognition exercises for both of these tenses. In addition, the high percentage of imperfect subjunctive forms in contemporary literary prose suggests that exercises should be designed to help students recognize imperfect subjunctive forms and their meanings as soon as the reading of literary prose is introduced in the curriculum.

While understanding which subjunctive tenses and verb forms should be highlighted for spoken and written French will surely make class time more efficient and effective, perhaps the most time-consuming and complicated part of presenting the subjunctive to students is dealing with the many contexts for its use and the semantic differences between the subjunctive and the indicative in contexts where both are possible. With respect to the issue of semantic nuancing through use of the subjunctive, analysis of the 53,265-clause database shows that such cases are virtually non-existent in actual French usage. For example, in all instances with *croire, penser, espérer,* and *trouver* in the independent clause, use of the subjunctive in the dependent clause was entirely linked to grammatical factors:

- was the sentence a VS interrogative or not?
- was the verb in the independent clause accompanied by a negative particle or not?

—was the verb in the dependent clause in the past or not?

In other words, particular linguistic contexts seem to trigger use of the subjunctive. So although both modes may be possible in a specific context, native use indicates that speakers tend to follow certain patterns of use that are determined by linguistic or lexical cues. For example, the structures that most frequently trigger subjunctive use in both the spoken and the written language are:

1. the verbs *falloir que*, *vouloir que*, *aimer que*, and “to be” + adj./adv./noun of opinion *que*; and
2. the conjunctions *pour que*, *sans que*, *avant que*, and *bien que*.

Therefore, instead of treating all possible subjunctive contexts as equally important, only these few structures frequent in both the spoken and the written language should be emphasized when presenting the general use of the subjunctive in French language classes. Classes focusing on either reading or formal spoken proficiency should include additional subjunctive contexts. For example, subjunctive contexts common only in the written language include the conjunctions *afin que*, *pourvu que*, *quoique*, *jusqu'à ce que*, *à moins que*, and *soit que*. Consequently, these contexts should be highlighted in classes focusing on the written language. On the other hand, subjunctive contexts prevalent in the spoken language include the conjunctions *le fait que* and *de/en sorte que*, as well as a few structurally simple constructions, such as the expression *que se soit* typically used to present hypothetical alternatives. Therefore, classes highlighting the development of speaking skills should include these contexts for subjunctive use. Even with these additional subjunctive triggers, however, it is clear that there are only a handful of subjunctive forms and contexts frequent in the spoken language. This suggests, supporting research by Lac (1982), Laurier (1989), and Poplack (1990), that the spoken subjunctive is more a syntactic or stylistic device than a productive grammatical structure with semantic meaning. At the very least, these data show that knowledge of a few subjunctive triggers and marked forms is all that is needed for students to demonstrate spoken subjunctive use similar to that of highly educated and respected native French speakers.

Although there are many other contexts in which use of the subjunctive is possible (e.g., after certain types of indefinite expressions and relative expressions), most of these other subjunctive contexts are seen in the database to be infrequent and restricted to particular types of written

discourse. The usefulness of their systematic treatment in a general French language class is, therefore, questionable.

## Relative Constructions

The numerous formation and usage rules of relative constructions are another area of the French language to which teachers often devote enormous amounts of classroom time. But which of the many relative pronoun forms do native speakers commonly use? Are any of these forms associated with particular verbs, grammatical structures, or language functions?

In Di Vito's (1997) database, 21% of all spoken clauses are relative constructions, which suggests their importance at all levels of French language study. But not all relative constructions are frequent in the database. In both the spoken and written language, *qui* and *qu(e)* are by far the most commonly used relative pronouns. Together with *ce qui* and *ce qu(e)* they account for approximately 75% of all relative pronouns in the written language and more than 80% of all relative pronouns in the spoken language. In many instances, these relatives are found in presentative constructions (such as *c'est X qui + verb*) whose primary function is to highlight information. Not surprisingly, such constructions are particularly common in the spoken language and in theater texts. These data, thus, suggest that:

1. subject and direct object relative clauses should be emphasized in the French language class over other relative clause types; and
2. students should see that these relative pronouns are commonly used in presentative constructions that function to highlight information, such as the following:

*C'est lui qui a dit cela.* (He's the one who said that.)

*C'est ma sœur que tu as vue hier.* (My sister's the one you saw yesterday.)

Relative constructions that are fairly infrequent in both the spoken and the written language include *dont*, *ce dont* (virtually non-existent), and relatives following prepositions. When found, these relative pronouns are, typically, in particular expressions, such as *la raison pour laquelle*, *la situation dans laquelle*, and *la façon dont*, or are the object of a very common verbal expression, such as *parler de*. Finally, the relative *où* is seen in the data to be quite frequent, and is often used in lieu of a more complicated prepositional relative option.

It follows from these data, therefore, that presenting and drilling the vast array of relative pronoun forms is not only an inefficient use of classroom time but poorly reflects native speaker use of relative constructions. Instead, French native speech patterns suggest that classroom emphasis on a select number of relative pronouns (*qui, ce qui, que, à ce qu[e],* and *où*) and expressions (*la raison pour laquelle, la façon dont, dont + parler*) would be a more appropriate way of providing students with the wherewithal to produce and understand the great majority of relative constructions common in the spoken and written language.

### Interrogative Structures

Another difficult decision facing French language teachers is how to present and contextualize the three primary ways to form questions in French [SV = Subject/Verb; VS = Verb/Subject]:

(SV)? *Tu viens avec nous?* (Are you coming with us?)

(VS)? *Quelle est la date aujourd'hui?* (What's the date today?)

*Est-ce que* (SV)? *Qu'est-ce que tu veux?* (What do you want?)

For example, teachers must decide whether to present these structures as interchangeable or as linked to particular types of discourse. Numerous studies have shown that the SV? pattern predominates in everyday, spoken French (Blanche-Benveniste and Jeanjean 1987; Chevalier 1969; Désirat and Hordé 1988; Fox 1991; Gadet 1989; Grundstrom and Léon 1973; Joseph 1988; Lightbown and d'Anglejan 1985; Maury 1973; Price 1971; etc.). However, does this generalization hold true for the more formal spoken registers or for any of the written registers? And what can one say about the difference in use between SV? and *Est-ce que* SV? Again, empirical research can shed much light on these questions.

The analysis of the spoken and written interrogatives found in the 53,265-clause database indicates that SV? syntax predominates in all spoken registers, with VS? frequent only in planned, non-interactive spoken discourse, such as academic conferences (VS? = 38% of all such interrogatives) and news broadcasts (VS? = 44% of all such interrogatives). Therefore, these data strongly support an emphasis on SV? interrogative syntax in communicatively-oriented French language classes. A great number of the examples of VS? syntax found in the spoken data are either rhetorical questions, simple *quel +V +S* constructions, or partial questions (i.e., non-yes/no questions) with pronominal subjects. Therefore, exercises

on VS? syntax in the spoken language should focus primarily on such constructions and functions, with yes/no questions and most non-rhetorical questions presented as typically formed using SV? syntax.

Besides being the norm in the spoken language, SV? syntax is also quite common in contemporary written texts containing abundant dialogue (such as twentieth-century theater, detective novels, and folklore and fairy tales). In all other written genres, however, VS? is the clear norm. Consequently, dialogue portions of several contemporary genres would be appropriate as written models of SV? interrogative syntax. However, once students begin to read more narrative prose and non-interactive written genres, genres that contain a good deal of VS? syntax, the introduction of VS? interrogative syntax in the classroom is essential.

What can be said about the difference between SV? and *Est-ce que* SV? interrogative syntax? Should these be presented as interchangeable or as linked with specific types of structures and discourse functions? In the 53,265-clause database, the use of these structures differs in several significant ways. First, *Est-ce que* SV? is virtually non-existent in written French, but is common in particular contexts in the spoken language. For example, it is the form most likely to be used when the interrogative is out of direct object position, especially with common fixed expressions such as *Qu'est-ce que ça veut dire?* and *Qu'est-ce que c'est?* Outside of such expressions, its major functions appear to be to signal the interrogative marking of a question that is embedded in a long stretch of discourse, that is, as a device to highlight hypothetical questions, or perhaps to buy time.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, such a structure could be presented to students as a strategy to buy time as they are formulating their discourse or as a interrogative marker of emphasis in class presentations or exposés.

### **Passé composé, imparfait, passé simple**

Perhaps the single most difficult area of French grammar for students to acquire is past narration, in particular, the various uses of the *passé composé* (PC), *imparfait* (IMP), and *passé simple* (PS). Presentation of these verbal forms in textbooks usually involves giving students a list of adverbial triggers for either the PC or the IMP and then a variety of general guidelines which are supposed to serve as a way of assessing the aspectual nature of the event or condition depicted in a particular sentence (e.g., Is the action completed or ongoing?). Unfortunately, such guidelines (especially when used at the sentence level) have been shown to be oftentimes

contradictory, inaccurate, or so vague as to be virtually useless as a way of discerning which verbal form would be more appropriate in a given context (Abrate 1983; Bourgeacq 1969; Conner 1992; Cox 1994; Dansereau 1987; Stavinochová 1978). If these pedagogical strategies have proven to be less than successful in the foreign language classroom or, even worse, inaccurate representations of the French language, what strategies would be better? The PS, for example, is usually characterized in broad terms by language textbooks as a “literary tense” and introduced at the more advanced language levels. However, where is the PS really used and how does it relate to the PC and IMP? Again, empirical research can offer some direction to the textbook author and language teacher in deciding how to present the use of these three past tenses.

In the 53,265-clause database, there are no clear-cut lexical triggers for use of either the IMP or the PC. It is true that one can see certain tendencies to use the IMP with the verbs *être* and *avoir* and with the adverbs *souvent* and *toujours* in the interactive spoken and written genres (conversations, interviews, theater pieces). Nevertheless, these tendencies can hardly be viewed as hard and fast rules. Instead, the only way to accurately characterize past tense use is by considering the larger discourse context. The PC is consistently used to foreground events, to promote verbs to the status of “event,” and in so doing, to provide the chronological backbone to a story. On the other hand, the IMP is consistently used as a backgrounding technique, that is, to elaborate or flesh out various features of the foregrounded events. Thus, while formation of the PC and IMP can certainly be dealt with separately, only by students discovering how the PC and IMP work together can they understand the important function each tense has in the recounting of a past narrative. Blyth (1997) gives several valuable suggestions for training TAs to teach aspect, essential to the presentation of the IMP and PC in French. When treating the PC and the IMP at the intermediate or the advanced level, a useful technique in displaying the versatility of the IMP as a backgrounding device would be to provide students with embedded narratives found within novels. When characters in novels become lost in reverie, or when the author wants to recount a side narrative, the IMP is often used to “freeze” the entire reverie sequence or side narrative within the unfolding larger narrative. Thus, while certainly these sequences represent a chronological ordering of events, the use of the IMP allows the reader to understand these embedded narratives as background to the main storyline.



With respect to the use of the PS, the database analysis also indicates that this tense is fairly common, not just in literary prose, but also in other non-literary written genres such as detective novels, folklore, and fairy tales. The genres in which the PS appears to be particularly frequent are those in which the fictionalization of characters or the psychological distancing of the author from the events or characters of his or her story is evident. Perhaps this is why the PS is so infrequent in the spoken genres, where presumably speakers personally identify with what they say, and why the PS is typically infrequent in the dialogue portions of literary theater and prose. As for when to introduce the PS in a French language class, these data suggest that it is relevant in any class that focuses on the reading of narrative prose, including non-literary texts. Consequently, some knowledge of the PS is clearly necessary for students at the intermediate-level of study and, arguably, even before the end of the beginning-level sequence. While one could probably avoid the PS by either inventing written texts or by avoiding texts with PS forms, a more honest approach to the French language is to admit that many texts in common, everyday genres (such as magazines, popular novels, and fairy tales) contain not just PC and IMP forms but also PS forms, and to provide students with some guidance in recognizing PS forms as soon as they begin to read written prose.

### **Object Pronouns**

Finally, the many series of French object pronouns (reflexive, direct, indirect, disjunctive, *y*, and *en*) also present a particular challenge to the language teacher. Clearly there is not enough time in the language classroom to expect students to completely master all of the different possible combinations of single and double object pronouns and their accompanying verbal or prepositional expressions. Emphasis should be placed on the most common forms in their most common contexts of use. But which are the most commonly used pronouns and in which linguistic and discourse contexts are they typically found?

### **Reflexive Pronouns**

In the Di Vito (1997) database, reflexive pronouns account for over a quarter of all object pronouns in both the spoken and written texts. Within the reflexive pronoun series, *se/s'* is by far the most common pronoun, accounting for virtually all of the reflexive pronouns in several of the

non-interactive genres, such as travel guides, magazines, and news broadcasts. In the interactive genres (especially conversations and interviews), the reflexive pronoun *me/m'* is also extremely common, in stark contrast to the very low frequency of the third person plural form *nous*, throughout the database. Although most textbooks first introduce reflexive pronouns in the context of one's daily routine, no doubt because of the number of reflexive verbs used in this context (for example, *se réveiller, se lever, s'habiller, se brosser les dents, se laver, se peigner, se déshabiller, se coucher*), the most frequent reflexive verb in the conversational data is the polyvalent *se faire* (e.g., *se faire une idée, se faire des amis, se faire INF [doubler, avoir]*). Other common verb + reflexive pronoun examples include *s'agir* (to be about), *se passer* (to happen, to take place), *se trouver* (to be), *se dire* (to say to oneself), *se demander* (to wonder, to ask oneself), and *s'appeler* (to be called), all expressions used in a wide variety of discourse contexts. There are very few double object constructions; of those few, the great majority are fairly fixed expressions, such as *il y en a* and *s'en aller*. Consequently, while reflexives in one's daily routine might still be a satisfactory way to demonstrate one type of reflexive construction, outside of the numerous semantic meanings of *se faire*, many of the most useful reflexive constructions for everyday discourse seem to be those best learned as lexical items.

### Direct Object Pronouns

One-third of all direct object pronouns, also quite common throughout the database, are found with the verbs *faire, dire, être, and savoir*. It is important to note here that the generic third person singular pronoun *le/l'* is quite frequently paired with the verb *faire*, and that it is the only direct object pronoun form used with the verbs *dire, être, and savoir*. Another commonly found direct object pronoun (especially in spoken discourse) is *me/m'*, which is frequently paired with the verbs *intéresser* and *frapper* and used in presentative constructions, such as: *Moi, ce qui m'intéresse beaucoup, c'est...* These native speaker patterns have clear pedagogical implications. While many verbs in French are transitive, only a fairly small number of them are commonly used by native speakers with direct object pronouns in this large spoken and written corpus. In addition, these verbs are often paired with particular direct object pronouns as well as with specific communicative functions. Clearly, such pairings should be highlighted:

*le/l'* with the verbs *faire*, *dire*, *être*, and *savoir*;

*me/m'* with the verbs *intéresser* and *frapper*, especially in presentative expressions.

### Indirect Object Pronouns

As with direct object pronouns, the first person form is a common indirect object (IO) pronoun in interactive discourse, particularly with verbs connoting personal feeling such as *plaire*, *faire envie/plaisir*, *manquer*, and *sembler*. Together with the verbs *dire*, *donner*, and *demander*, these few verbs account for approximately 50% of all those verbs with which indirect object pronouns are found in the database. Consequently, classroom time spent on indirect object pronouns should focus on these few verbs. Double object constructions involving either direct or indirect object pronouns are rare in both the spoken and written database. The most common double object pronoun construction in the database involving these object pronouns is the expression IO pronoun + *le* + *dire* (*comme je vous le disais...*, *je vous le dis*, *il me l'a dit*). Consequently, classroom exercises stressing double object pronouns should be limited to such contexts.

### Disjunctive Pronouns

Given the importance of disjunctive pronouns as a way of highlighting information in French (Calvé 1985; Joseph 1988), it is perhaps not surprising that such pronouns are very common as such devices in the interactive discourse types in the database (especially conversations, interviews, and plays):

1. Left dislocation: *Moi, j'aime pas tellement les bûches.*  
(Conversations: Claude)  
**Me, I don't particularly like Christmas (cake) logs.**
2. Right dislocation: *Que racontes-tu, toi?*  
(Twentieth-Century Theater: Giraudoux)  
**What are you saying, you?**
3. *Ce + être + relative clause: C'est moi qui vais vous en poser une.*  
(Conferences: Delart)  
**I'm going to ask you one (question).**

In fact, over half of all disjunctive pronouns in interactive discourse function as highlighting devices in such structures. This, then, is clearly one function of disjunctive pronouns that should be included in the French language classroom. While the use of disjunctive pronouns after prepositions (for example, *avec lui, pour moi, sans eux*) or following *que/qu'* in comparative or restrictive expressions (for example, *il est plus agile que moi*) are important structural rules for students to acquire, their functional role in interactive communication is perhaps the most important feature of disjunctive pronouns for students to understand and assimilate.

### The Object Pronoun *y*

With respect to the object pronoun *y*, its most frequent context of use is in the expression *il y a*. In fact, in the spoken language, 93% of all occurrences of *y* are found in this one expression. Of course, *y* is used to refer to places or as the inanimate object of verb + *à* expressions. It is interesting to note, however, that native speakers in the database do not employ such expressions often. Only 4% of all examples of *y* refer to places and only 3% are objects of verb + *à* constructions in the spoken database (the only frequent expressions are *répondre à, participer à, and croire à*). These data suggest that the aural/oral focus in French language classrooms should primarily be on the expression *il y avoir*, with perhaps some minor emphasis on *y* as a place referent or as the object of the verbs *répondre à, participer à, and croire à*. In the written language however, the pronoun *y* is often found to refer to places (26% of all examples of *y*) and to the objects of a fairly wide variety of verbs of mental attitude such as *y croire, y tenir, y comprendre, y songer, and y penser* (14% of all examples of *y*). When designing written contextualization exercises for *y*, therefore, native speaker usage supports the presentation of a wider variety of structural contexts.

### The Object Pronoun *en*

Although *en* has several discourse functions, its most common use throughout the spoken and written database is with certain types of verbs:

1. special *avoir* expressions: *avoir besoin, l'air, marre, envie, ras-le-bol*;
2. the verbs *parler* and *faire*; and
3. a fairly wide variety of pronominal expressions (*s'en faire, s'en aller, s'en fichier, s'en faire, s'en douter, s'en souvenir, s'en rendre compte, s'en moquer*).

In addition, *en* is frequently used by native speakers in:

4. modified intransitives signifying “to be” (such as *en suis content*); and
5. quantified expressions (such as *en ai trois*).

These, then, are the contexts that should be highlighted in French language classes. As for the use of *en* in double object constructions, it is indeed common in pronominal expressions (which account for almost half of the contexts) and in the expression *il y en a* (which accounts for almost half of the remaining contexts). Again, these data should direct the types of double object exercises presented to students. Rather than drilling the numerous possible combinations of double object pronoun constructions, students should first become comfortable with these few commonly used expressions.

## **A Cross-Cultural Approach to Presenting Speech Acts**

In addition to knowing the general frequency and specific discourse functions of different grammatical structures, language students need to understand the conventional speech act norms of the target language they are studying. Most language teachers now believe that foreign language acquisition involves mastering not just a set of grammatical rules but also the social rules of appropriate language use. Consequently, interactive activities, particularly those highlighting common speech acts (e.g., complimenting, greeting, making excuses), are now a feature of most contemporary language textbooks. Given the emphasis placed on such exercises, one is tempted to view almost any interactive, engaging exercise involving speech acts as inherently useful in a language classroom. But is an activity worthwhile solely because it is focused on a speech act and is interactive and engaging?

Language textbooks tend to present speech acts as primarily lexical exercises. Typically students are given a list of expressions associated with a particular speech act and then asked to acquire the speech act by practicing these expressions in role plays. This approach, of course, assumes that speech acts play out in similar ways across cultures. However, numerous research studies have demonstrated that what constitutes an apology, a request, or an invitation in one culture is not always recognized as such in another. In other words, what is perceived as an appropriate apology in one culture may be perceived as inappropriate in another.

Research has suggested that language learners do not naturally acquire the speech act norms of a foreign language, but rather transfer their own cultural norms, including values and meanings (Blum-Kulka 1982). Unfortunately, this transfer of speech act norms has also been shown to cause cross-cultural communication breakdown (Fraser, Rintell, and Walters 1980; Kerbrat-Orecchioni 1994; Thomas 1983). These cross-cultural studies strongly suggest the need to revise the way in which language teachers present speech acts to their students. By allowing students to assume that the acquisition of speech acts in a foreign language is merely a lexical issue, we may be setting them up for communicative and, even worse, social failure. How can one create and maintain affective bonds with another if the two participants are operating under different notions of what constitutes appropriate and inappropriate behavior? In this section, the discussion focuses on recent cross-cultural speech act research: extending and responding to invitations, offers, and requests from French and American perspectives. Some of the many ways in which French and Americans may be miscommunicating when involved in these speech acts will be described, and new types of pedagogical exercises to help teachers better deal with cross-cultural issues will be proposed.

### **Directness vs. Indirectness as a Cultural Norm in Certain Speech Acts**

Given the numerous studies on the American tendency toward *indirectness* in extending and responding to invitations, requests, and apologies (Blum-Kulka 1982, 1983; Ohlstein and Blum Kulka 1984; Ohlstein and Cohen 1989; Wolfson 1981; Wolfson, D'Amico-Reisner, and Huber 1983) and the French tendency toward *directness* (Geis and Harlow 1996) in requests, there is reason to hypothesize that certain communication problems between the French and Americans and certain negative cultural stereotypes that some French and Americans have of each other are due to differing uses of directness and indirectness in the two cultures. In order to test these hypotheses, my colleagues<sup>2</sup> and I decided to collect a number of French sequences of invitations, self-invitations (requests), and offers, and then to compare French and American responses to them. For each exchange that implied or directly stated an invitation, request or offer, or a response to an invitation, request or offer, we developed a question designed to uncover culture-bound attitudes and behavioral tendencies. For example, in the sequence where one character responds to an invitation

with *Ah samedi soir je ne sais pas si je serai libre* (Oh Saturday night, I don't know if I'll be free), the informants were asked to rate the extent to which the response should be interpreted as an implicit refusal to the invitation (with 1 indicating that the response is an implicit refusal and 10 indicating that the response is to be interpreted at face value) and then to explain their answer. Sequences with more than one key exchange were spread over several pages in order to oblige informants to evaluate the exchanges as they unfolded in the conversation (i.e., without knowing what dialogue came next). In this way, they were able to evaluate the interaction in much the same way as we do in real conversations—as it unfolds. There were four groups of informants: French natives (N = 15; 6 male, 9 female; age = 25–65 years), American teachers of French (N = 8; 5 male, 3 female; age = 25–35 years; all had lived in France at least one year), and two groups of American students: one a high-intermediate French class (N = 19; 4 male, 15 female; age = 17–21 years) and one a low-intermediate French class (N = 56; 3 male, 26 female; age = 17–21 years except for one 27-year old). Each informant was told that they would be reading different dialogues and that they would be asked to evaluate their feelings about various exchanges within the dialogues. Although a vocabulary key was provided to the students, the dialogue was in French with no translation. (The translation provided here is for the benefit of the reader.)

Even though many of the sequences indicated differences in norms between French and Americans, this article will focus on just one sequence that offers a particularly clear view of the ways in which French and Americans can negatively evaluate the other's behavior by misinterpreting it. In the sequence which we entitled “Ça t'embête?” from *Un conte de printemps*, a film by Eric Rohmer, we see Jeanne, who enters her apartment and finds her female cousin, to whom she had lent her apartment for a week. Her cousin announces that she will have to stay another week and asks if that will bother Jeanne. Jeanne responds that it will not bother her at all. Her cousin indicates that she can go to a hotel, to which Jeanne reiterates that she is not at all bothered and that she hardly lives there anymore and is just returning to get some books. Her cousin, in an apparent effort to show gratitude, invites Jeanne out to dinner on Saturday night. Jeanne responds that she does not know if she is free or not. Her cousin repeats the invitation enthusiastically, and Jeanne says that she will call her and asks her cousin if she will be home (presumably to get the call). Her cousin gives Jeanne the precise times when she will be at home.

*Ça t'embête?* (Does that bother you?)

**COUSIN:** *Devine quoi?*  
**Guess what?**

**JEANNE:** *Ben, je ne sais pas.*  
**I don't know, what?**

**COUSIN:** *Il va falloir que je reste une semaine de plus. Ça t'embête?*  
**I'm going to have to stay another week. Does that bother you?**  
 [end of exchange 1]

**JEANNE:** *Oh, non, pas du tout.*  
**No, no, not at all.**

**COUSIN:** *Non, parce que je peux aller à l'hôtel, hein!*  
**No, because I can go to a hotel!**

**JEANNE:** *Mais tu es folle! Ça ne m'embête absolument pas. De toute façon, je te l'ai dit, je n'habite pratiquement plus ici. Je suis juste venue prendre quelques bouquins.*  
**You're crazy! It doesn't bother me one bit. In any case, I told you, I practically don't live here anymore. I just came to get some books.**

**COUSIN:** *Ecoute, je suis tellement confuse. C'est tellement gentil de ta part. Gildas vient me chercher samedi et nous partons dimanche. Ça te ferait plaisir de venir avec nous au restaurant samedi soir?*  
**Listen, I don't know what to say. It's so nice of you. Gildas is coming to get me Saturday and we're leaving Sunday. Would you like to go out to dinner with us Saturday night?**

**JEANNE:** *Ah samedi soir, je ne sais pas si je serai libre.*  
**Oh Saturday night, I don't know if I will be free.**  
 [end of exchange 2]

**COUSIN:** *Oh, je t'en prie, dis oui! On y tient absolument.*  
**Oh, please, say yes! We really want you to come.**

**JEANNE:** *Ben, écoute, je te téléphonerai. Tu seras là?*  
**Well, listen, I'll call you. You'll be there?**  
 [end of exchange 3]

**COUSIN:** *Tous les jours entre six heures et demie et sept heures et demie, tu es sûre de me trouver là.*



**Every day between six-thirty and seven-thirty, you're sure to find me there.**

*Exchange 1: Responding to a Request (Auto-Invitation)*

In the first exchange, the informants are asked to imagine that they are Jeanne, and that they would rather *not* have their cousin stay in the apartment another week. They must indicate to what extent they could directly tell her so on a scale of 1 to 10, with “1” indicating that it would be “very impolite” to answer the cousin directly and state that her staying longer in the apartment would be an inconvenience, and “10” indicating that it would be “perfectly polite” to refuse the cousin directly. Positive face needs (within the framework of Brown and Levinson 1978) would lead the speaker to answer indirectly or sublimate feelings of being inconvenienced in order to maintain harmony with the cousin; negative face needs would lead the speaker to be honest and overtly indicate annoyance with the request. Our hypothesis was that the French natives would answer higher on the response continuum (5–10) while the American groups would answer lower on the continuum (1–5). As indicated in Table 1, all three American informant groups were less inclined to voice their inconvenience directly to the cousin.

*Table 1*

Mean responses to question: Could you directly tell your cousin that you don't want her to stay longer in your apartment and still be polite?

1 = No. It would be impolite to directly refuse my cousin.

10 = Yes. It would be perfectly polite to directly refuse my cousin.

Informant group	Mean response*
American low-intermediate students of French	4.4
American high-intermediate students of French	4.3
American teachers of French	4.1
Native French speakers	6.9

\* T-test significant at the .02 level for groups 1, 2, and 3 versus group 4.

The reasons offered for the responses given by the American groups were typically that “family is family” and cannot be refused, at least not directly, such as in the following statements by the American informants:

“I’d act agitated and confusing (sic), probably make some pathetic excuse, but ultimately I’d feel I couldn’t kick her out—she’s family!”

“I would probably fold and let her stay but if I had the guts I would probably feel fine saying that it would be better if she made other arrangements.”

The reticence of the American informants to directly voice their feelings is noteworthy for two reasons. First, one would assume the need for positive face behavior to protect the relationship of cousins to be fairly low, since one’s bonds with family members are typically considered to be among the strongest of our various relationships. Secondly, the fact that the request involves taking over one’s private living space makes the impingement level on Jeanne fairly high. Even so, the American informants felt uncomfortable directly voicing their annoyance at the self-invitation. In contrast, the French informants tended toward the direct approach:

*J’ai envie de retrouver mon appartement, je le dis poliment mais franchement.*

**If I wanted my apartment back, I’d say so politely but frankly.**

In fact, whereas only six of the 83 American informants chose either “9” or “10,” seven of the 15 French informants did so, suggesting that a completely direct response is more within the norms of appropriate behavior in French culture than in American culture when responding to such a self-invitation.

### *Exchange 2: Interpreting a Response to an Invitation*

In another exchange, the cousin asks Jeanne to dinner. From all appearances, the invitation is a positive-face strategy, a sort of “pay back” for Jeanne’s graciousness in allowing her to stay longer in the apartment. Jeanne answers that she does not know whether or not she will be free that night. The informants were asked to put themselves in the cousin’s shoes and decide how to interpret Jeanne’s answer. Is she indirectly refusing the invitation or should her response be interpreted at face value? All American groups of informants “read between the lines” of Jeanne’s response, seeing it as a possible indirect refusal to the invitation (see Table 2).

*Table 2*

Mean responses to question at end of exchange 2 (*Ah samedi soir, je ne sais pas si je serai libre*): Is Jeanne's response an indirect refusal to the invitation?

1 = Yes. Her response is an implicit but clear refusal.

10 = No. Her response merely indicates that she is not free on that Saturday.

Informant group	Mean response *
American low-intermediate students of French	5.6
American high-intermediate students of French	4.3
American teachers of French	5.5
Native French speakers	7.9

\*T-test significant at the .001 level for groups 1, 2, and 3 versus group 4.

Some informants, in fact, saw a clear-cut refusal in Jeanne's statement:

"She has said that she is unavailable on that night and is refusing the invitation."

"If she is not free, she cannot go, I wouldn't press the case."

"It seems pretty clear that it's a refusal and there probably isn't a big chance that she will accept."

Others noted their reading of the response as a way of being polite or trying to avert causing any hurt feelings:

"It's pretty clear she's just being polite but does not want to join me on Saturday."

"It sounds like a way to dismiss me without hurting my feelings."

The French informants, however, clearly took Jeanne's response at face value, both in their ratings and in their written interpretations of the exchange:

*Je ne sais pas si elle sera libre ou pas!*  
**I don't know if she'll be free or not!**

*La réponse de Jeanne indique seulement qu'elle ne sait pas ce qu'elle fait le samedi en question.*

**Jeanne's response only indicates that she doesn't know what she's doing that particular Saturday.**

*Jeanne ne connaissant pas son emploi du temps précisément, j'insisterai à nouveau.*

**Since Jeanne doesn't know her precise schedule, I'll ask again (later).**

### *Exchange 3: Interpreting a Response to an Invitation*

In the final exchange, the cousin enthusiastically reiterates her invitation, to which Jeanne responds that she will call. Jeanne asks when the cousin will be home (presumably to receive the call), and the cousin gives Jeanne times when she is sure to be in. At this point, the informants were asked to put themselves in the cousin's shoes and say not only if they would expect a call from Jeanne but also if they would think it rude if she did not call. Again, the French informants interpreted the exchange more at face value than the American informants, with the student responses indicating their clear tendency to read a refusal into the statement (see Table 3).

*Table 3*

Mean responses to question: Is Jeanne's statement that she will call merely a polite, indirect refusal?

1 = Yes. It is a polite refusal. I do not expect her to call.

10 = No. I expect her to call and will think her impolite if she does not.

<b>Informant group</b>	<b>Mean response *</b>
American low-intermediate students of French	5.9
American high-intermediate students of French	5.7
American teachers of French	7.7
Native French speakers	8.7

\*T-test significant at the .001 level for groups 1 and 2 versus groups 3 and 4.

Once more, the written interpretations of the American informants suggest that certain responses are typically read as a polite way to refuse an invitation:

“I’ve used the same line before.”

“I don’t think she actually wants to go and is just saying she’ll call to be polite.”

“I would feel that Jeanne had not wanted to accept my invitation and that my begging had made her feel that she must at least give a pretense of accepting. I would be glad for her to come, but would definitely not expect her to call.”

And once more, the French informants wrote of their inability to read Jeanne’s response as a refusal. In fact, most informants focused on the politeness issue of calling rather than on whether the response was an indirect refusal or not, suggesting that they did not even see a possible refusal issue:

*C’est une politesse de confirmer ou refuser une invitation.*

**It’s polite to confirm or refuse an invitation.**

*Par politesse je l’invite, donc il me semble normal d’avoir une réponse, donc un coup de fil.*

**I was polite to invite her so it seems to me to be normal to have a response, therefore, a call.**

*Elle ne semble pas décidée alors j’attendrais son appel que ce soit pour confirmer ou annuler.*

**She doesn’t seem to have decided so I’d wait for her call whether it’s to confirm or cancel.**

*En effet Jeanne n’ayant pas donné de réponse directe, il serait déplacé de sa part de ne pas rappeler.*

**Because Jeanne didn’t give a direct response, it would be wrong on her part not to call back.**

For this particular question, the responses of the American teachers of French were much more similar to the French responses than to the responses by the other American groups. This could be due to the low N of this group or it could be due to the fact that this group had had a greater exposure to French culture than the other American groups.

## General Analysis of the Exchanges

In general, the responses of the informants suggest fairly clear differences between French and American directness norms which, in turn, suggest differences in what is being communicated (e.g., has an invitation been extended or not? has it been refused or not?) as well as in the perceived polite or impolite nature of the interaction. Positive face needs did not seem to be a significant factor for the French in refusing a request, in interpreting an invitation, or in responding to that invitation. Consequently, directness in voicing one's feelings and face value interpretations of words were the norm in the French interpretations of the invitational sequence. In contrast, despite the general perception of Americans as being frank and straightforward, all three groups of American informants favored the more positive-face strategy of indirectness in voicing the refusal of the request (even by a family member, whose social bonds would presumably be sufficiently strong to withstand the direct rejection of a request).

In noting that Americans offer not only genuine invitations but also "ostensible invitations," Isaacs and Clark (1990) suggest that invitations may serve a purely social function. In this study, the American informants' interpretation of the invitational exchanges can be seen as a series of positive-face moves, functioning solely to maintain social bonds between the participants.<sup>3</sup> One can read the entire exchange between Jeanne and her cousin as an elaborate verbal confirmation of their social bonds through the use of certain conventionalized statements. Let us hypothesize that Jeanne has read the cousin's invitation as a gesture of appreciation. In order to acknowledge it as such but not put the cousin out, she responds that she does not know if she is free. The cousin sees Jeanne's response as an acknowledgment of her gesture but wants Jeanne to know that she truly would be happy for Jeanne to read the invitation as a genuine one and so she reiterates it. Jeanne acknowledges the invitation once more by noting that she will call, which may again be interpreted as no more than an acknowledgment.

Whether or not one sees the American interpretations of this French exchange as evidence that invitational exchanges may serve a purely social function in American culture, the clear differences in the American and French responses to this and the request sequence indicate that politeness norms may differ dramatically in certain speech act routines in the two cultures. Direct refusals of a request, even by an intimate, may be viewed as rude or impolite by Americans even though it may be seen as completely acceptable behavior within French culture. And in tending to take invitations and responses to invitations more at face value, French people may consider Americans as rude or impolite when they say they will call and they do not, or when they extend an invitational statement and do not follow it through. At the very least, these data demonstrate how dangerous it is to assume that an “invitation is an invitation” or “requests are requests” when the interaction is a cross-cultural one.

### **Pedagogical Implications of Cross-cultural Speech Act Research**

Even if one acknowledges that the transfer of cross-cultural norms may, in fact, result in miscommunication and negative cultural stereotyping, the direct classroom implications of this and other such cross-cultural studies are not as evident. It is one thing to demonstrate possible misunderstandings of one specific realization of a speech act due to a conflict in cultural norms. It is quite another thing, however, to generalize from that one speech act example to an entire speech act type (as applying to all invitational exchanges, for example). Indeed, it is clearly impossible to use the results of cross-cultural studies to formulate any precise speech act “rules” (linguistic or social) for foreign language students. The only thing one can do is help students to learn how culturally embedded their own behavioral norms are and show them some of the ways in which these norms may either impede students from appropriately evaluating target language norms or result in students being inappropriately evaluated by target language speakers.

But does the language teacher really have the time to deal with such questions? If one intends to present speech acts over the course of the year (as is currently the case in contemporary foreign language textbooks), certainly not. However, by continuing to treat speech acts as an acquisitional goal that requires little more than the memorization and practice

of a few lexical expressions, language teachers are encouraging students to view speech act norms as culturally universal and are actually leading them down the garden path to miscommunication and negative cultural stereotyping.

While language teachers may not be able to give students concrete rules of interpretation when acquiring a foreign language, they can certainly help them to develop strategies of interpretation. In order to develop strategies of interpretation, students must first learn to question their own behavioral norms. One way to do this is to encourage students to consider how certain expressions can result in cultural misunderstandings. With respect to invitations, for example, a short discussion of the possible misunderstanding by French people of the American expression "We'll have to get together for lunch sometime" would be appropriate. Taped interviews of native French speakers on this issue could be a useful point of departure for discussion. Once students have grasped the idea that a statement which to them is ambiguous may be interpreted by target language speakers as a real invitation, they are ready to explore the flip side of the coin. How does one know when an invitation by a target language speaker has been unambiguously extended? Again, taped interviews on the topic could be provocative classroom or homework materials. While such exercises will not provide formulaic rules, they will oblige students to question how they interpret what other people say and how and why their own behavior may be misinterpreted. Since most cross-cultural miscommunication is due not to lexical or grammatical problems, but rather to "pragmatic failure" (Thomas 1983), sensitivity to sociolinguistic and sociocultural norms is arguably the key to acquiring a foreign language and the most important tool that a language teacher can help a student to develop.

Exercises designed to promote reflection on cultural norms can easily be incorporated even in beginning-level French classes. At the University of Chicago this past year, invitational film sequences and excerpts of taped interviews with native speakers were included as part of the unit on extending and responding to invitations (which we introduced toward the end of the second quarter and again at the beginning of the third quarter of study). One interview was with Tomas, an exchange student from the Ecole Normale Supérieure in Paris, who explains one type of American behavior that he has had a hard time understanding since arriving in the U.S. He states that Americans seem to make plans that do not go anywhere, that they will say "Friday, we'll absolutely have to go to this restaurant or go



dancing or do this or that” but that Friday will come and go and nothing happens. Students were given the passage as a (fairly heavily glossed) reading assignment (reproduced in the Appendix), with the following questions to answer in English:

- (1) Summarize in general terms why Tomas is disappointed (i.e., what he thinks, what he does, what happens after).
- (2) In your opinion, how should one interpret expressions such as the following: “Let’s get together for lunch this week.” “We’ll *have* to go out this weekend.”
- (3) What might Tomas’ misunderstanding indicate with respect to the way in which French people make invitations?
- (4) Given Tomas’ misunderstanding, what hypothesis can you make that might explain why some French people hold a stereotype of Americans as being dishonest?
- (5) How might this difference in invitational norms lead some Americans to misunderstand French people in certain (invitational) contexts?

Students also completed short questionnaires on various film sequences involving invitations and offers. A scene from *Un coeur en hiver* (by Claude Sautet) composed of a one-line offer was a particularly successful classroom exercise. Here Maxime and Fabien, old friends and professional partners, have just come out of a café. Maxime offers Fabien a ride part of the way home in his car by saying:

*Je ne suis pas en avance, mais si tu veux que je te rapproche...*

**I’m running late, but if you want me to take you part of the way home . . .**

*Table 4*

Mean responses to question: Imagine that you are Fabien and that you would like a ride. How appropriate would it be to accept Maxime’s offer at this point (without him saying anything more)?

Choose from 1–10 (1 = completely inappropriate; 10 = completely appropriate)

<b>Informant group</b>	<b>Mean response</b>
American students of French	5.2
Native French speakers	9.3

Students were then asked to rate on a scale of 1 to 10 how appropriate it would be to accept Maxime's invitation and explain their response (see Table 4).

We then presented back to the students the tendencies apparent in their own answers along with some of the American and French tendencies shown in our surveys. Here are some sample responses of American students in the winter 1998 beginning-level French class:

"Maxime is politely saying he can't give Fabien a ride."

"Maxime did offer, but it sounds as though he is only being polite."

"Maxime is running late. He would rather not give Fabien a ride, but must offer because they're friends."

"Except with a great need, inconveniencing a friend is not acceptable."

"You're putting Maxime in an awkward position."

"He says he's running late. He should first decline, then if he insists, accept."

"You refuse the first offer. You let your friend talk you into it."

"He should probably say 'Are you sure?' first."

Along with these data students listened to an excerpt of a taped interview with a native speaker discussing the same segment. Here the interviewer tells Florence that some students thought that the fact that Maxime mentioned that he's running late suggests that he's just being polite and then asks her what she thinks of that interpretation. We gave the students the excerpt as a *semi-dictée* listening comprehension exercise to do outside of class:

Florence discusses the segment by referring to the relationship between friends in French culture:

**FLORENCE:** *Je crois comme différence aussi c'est que les Français se sentent moins obligés entre amis de faire des choses. C'est-à-dire qu'en fait si la personne le dit, c'est que ça l'arrange peut-être pas mais c'est quand même pas un gros problème. Si vraiment c'était un problème—ils se sentent assez à l'aise, justement parce qu'ils sont amis, de pas lui proposer—ce sera pas un problème qu'il lui propose pas de le ramener—il lui dira "je te ramène pas parce que là je suis vraiment en retard, donc il faut que j'y aille. L'autre dira: "oui, oui, bien sûr."*

**FLORENCE:** I think as a difference also is that French people feel less obliged among friends to do things. That's to say that, in fact, if the person says it, then maybe it's not convenient but still it's not a big problem. If it were really a big problem—they feel free, precisely because they're friends, to not offer—it won't be a problem for him not to offer to take him home—he'll say "I'm not taking you home because I'm really late, so I have to go."

The other will say: "Sure, sure, of course."

We then asked students to answer the following questions:

- (1) Given the discussion of the segment by Florence and the sample American responses, how would you characterize the major difference(s) between the French and American respondents?
- (2) Looking at these American responses and Florence's remarks as an indication of possible cultural tendencies, what type of hypotheses could you make about the rights and obligations of friends in the two cultures?
- (3) How could such tendencies result in miscommunication or negative cultural evaluation?

Once this written assignment was handed in, we again presented back to students their own responses so that they could see the various tendencies present among themselves (see Table 5).

*Table 5*

Characterizations of French and American culture by first year university students of French (underlining indicates key thoughts)

**In general**, many of you used the word "etiquette" and "politeness" when referring to American norms of making offers to friends and opposed this to a more straightforward, "genuine offer" which is more common in French culture.

**Specific comments about French culture:**

- French take words at face value.
- There is a sense in which for the French you say only what you mean—offers are extended only if there is the intention of carrying them out.

*(Continued on page 90)*

*Table 5 (continued)*

- In France, it seems that if a friend makes an offer to do something, the person has the right to take him up.
- Obviously the French believe one can be more free to show their feelings in a friendship whereas Americans do not.

**Specific comments about American culture:**

- Americans think that certain things are said out of politeness but not really meant.
- With Americans there is a meta—or sub-dialogue which must be read.
- In the US it seems a friend is obligated to make somewhat of an offer to a friend, but the friend is also expected to ensure that the offer is sincere.
- Americans believe they must be polite and offer . . .

**Possible problems that Americans might have with French people:**

- Americans who offered a French person a ride in the manner that Maxime did might be taken at face value. The American would be annoyed at the French person's lack of manners.
- There may be a misreading of intentions—and a misunderstanding of etiquette. The American whose offer is accepted may be put off, since he/she had thought it was clear that the offer was extended out of mere surface politeness, the rhetoric of etiquette, rather than as a “real” offer.
- French people might seem either intrusive or rude if they intervene when not asked or if they don't invite when they don't really mean it.
- The American may find the French person pushy.
- The American might offer just to be nice, and the French might jump into the car right away (this is rude in American culture).

**Possible problems that French people might have with Americans:**

- A French person might be offended that an American would “argue” about an offer that was freely given.
- Americans might seem cold or uninterested because they may interpret invitations as polite questions and not real offers.
- The French might consider the Americans to be rude because of how they treat their friends.

Because we were dealing with beginning-level students, we did not try to discuss these issues in the classroom since they could not do so in French but rather had students do these exercises primarily as listening comprehension, reading, and reflection exercises. All exercises were graded; however, we agreed that there would be no right or wrong answer on the reflection exercises. Since the goal of these exercises was to encourage students to question both their own cultural norms and the way in which they evaluate the behavior of people from other cultures, they received full credit as long as their answer showed that they had thought about the issue. The response to these exercises by the students was enthusiastic. Oftentimes before and after class we found students discussing their impression of various aspects of typical American behavior (especially between American and non-American students in the class) or their impression of the behavior of people from other cultures.

The last issue we had to resolve was how to test this more culturally-oriented unit. We finally decided to include it in the essay section of the final exam. Here students were told the following:

Imagine that you have been living in Paris for a year and have become friends with a French person. Write a letter to someone back home:

- a. describing this person (physical and character portrait, background, etc.);
- b. narrating how the two of you met; and
- c. discussing how the friendship evolved (including a misunderstanding between the two of you due to cultural differences).

The imaginary anecdotes recounted by the students were very diverse. In some essays students missed out on outings with their French friend because they had not realized that an invitation had been extended; in other essays they discovered that some statement they had made had been misinterpreted by their French friend as a firm invitation. Students typically included in their anecdotes some change in the social evaluation of one or the other person, for example, their French friend thought that they were superficial or they thought that the French friend was too direct or aggressive, but then they each realized they had misinterpreted the other's intentions. Although we had been careful to avoid giving generalizations to students as we presented the different types of data to them (including several short excerpts from Raymonde Carroll's *Evidences Invisibles*, 1987),

clearly students had formed their own hypotheses about possible differences in cultural norms and how such differences might lead to misunderstandings and negative cultural stereotyping.

## Conclusion

In this essay, it was shown how sociolinguistic and sociocultural research can help the foreign language teacher and textbook author to decide how to link linguistic form, function, context, and social meaning. Understanding the frequency and functions of grammatical structures in different spoken and written discourse is invaluable information in deciding which structures to emphasize and how best to contextualize them. In addition, it was demonstrated that cultural norms often impact on how language is used and interpreted in common, everyday interactions. Discussion of the possible miscommunication that can result from the transfer of cultural norms was suggested as one way of helping students to develop an understanding of both their own language use and target language use as rooted in cultural norms.

## Notes

1. Suggestion made by Cécile Denier, passing along the comments of Jacques Filliolet, Maître de Linguistique at the Université de Paris X-Nanterre.
2. Claude Grangier has been one of the primary researchers in this study since its inception. Jane Blevins identified the invitational sequences in the various films and completed initial transcriptions of the film segments. Agnès Hy collaborated in this research project during the 1995-96 academic year. I am indebted to the Consortium for Language Teaching and Learning for having funded this project. I am grateful to Thierry Hoquet and Florence Cédiey for allowing interviews with them to be used in this research project.
3. I am grateful to Rosemary Buck for this insight on an earlier analysis of this sequence.

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## Appendix

### *A Frenchman's (mis)perception of American behavior*

Tomas talks about the American tendency to make plans that do not go anywhere:

**TOMAS:** *...peut-être que les gens font beaucoup plus de projets dans le vide. C'est-à-dire ils peuvent vous dire "vendredi il faut absolument qu'on aille là" ou "il faut absolument qu'on aille dans ce restaurant, qu'on sorte en boîte—qu'on fasse ci ou ça" et donc moi, d'une certaine façon il y a une petite case dans ma tête où c'est inscrit "réserver ma soirée pour ça vendredi soir" et puis le soir arrive et ben, rien.*

*Donc, d'une certaine façon on peut revoir les gens régulièrement et puis faire quelque chose avec eux mais c'est souvent plus spontané—disons que, quand les gens vous disent "il faut absolument qu'on fasse ça ensemble," ça veut pas dire qu'on va le faire. Même s'il y a "absolument" dans la phrase [laugh]. Et ça c'est, ben, ça me fait toujours de la peine quoi enfin. C'est toujours un peu dût à accepter... en fait, je me rends compte que j'ai encore été trop crédule et que je me suis encore fait avoir [laugh].*

*Donc ça c'est un peu décevant. Surtout que les Américains ne supportent pas qu'on leur dise "tu as fait ça parce que tu es américain". Ils vont toujours trouver d'autres raisons. C'est-à-dire, ils vont me dire "on en avait parlé juste une fois" ou "je croyais que tu étais au courant que les plans avaient changé entretemps".*

**CLAUDE:** *Parce que toi tu penses—c'est comme des excuses...*

**TOMAS:** *Oui, moi je trouve que c'est de la mauvaise foi à la limite. C'est vraiment de la mauvaise foi et puis même je crois que c'est une généralité, que vraiment, il faut pas compter sur les plans qui sont lancés comme ça à la minute.*

**TOMAS:** *... maybe (American) people make a lot more projects that don't go anywhere. That's to say, they can tell you "Friday we absolutely have to go there" or "we absolutely have to go to this*

restaurant—have to go dancing—have to do this or that” and, me, to a certain degree there’s a place in my head where it’s written “Reserve my Friday evening for that” and then the evening arrives and well, nothing.

So, to some degree you can see people regularly and then do something with them, but it’s oftentimes more spontaneous—let’s say that, when people tell you “we absolutely have to do that together,” it doesn’t mean that you’re going to do it. Even if there’s “absolutely” in the sentence. And that always hurts me. It’s always a little hard to accept . . . in fact, I realize that once again I’ve been too gullible and that I’ve been had.

So that’s a little disappointing. Especially since Americans can’t stand people to tell them that “you did that because you’re American.” They’ll always find other reasons. That’s to say, they’ll tell me “we’d only talked about it once” or “I thought you knew that plans had changed since we talked.”

*CLAUDE:* Because you think—it’s like they’re excuses . . .

*TOMAS:* Yes, I think that you could say it’s dishonest. It’s really dishonest and then I even think that it’s a generalization (one can make about Americans), that truly, you can’t count on plans that are thrown out like that, on the spur of the moment.

PART II



**Research and Language Program  
Directors: Possibilities**

# BELIEFS AND PRACTICES OF TEACHING ASSISTANTS TOWARD TARGET LANGUAGE USE IN ELEMENTARY FRENCH CLASSES

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## Introduction

Should foreign language teachers use English in their classroom instruction or should they use the target language exclusively? This issue has long been a source of conflict within the language teaching profession. The controversy has persisted even as the profession has moved from teaching for the mastery of grammatical structures to teaching for the development of the ability to communicate real-life messages in the target language (Williams and Burden 1997). Some foreign language educators contend that teachers' use of English serves an important support role for students whose proficiency in the target language limits what they can communicate in that tongue. Others maintain that any use of English deprives students of exposure to the target language that is essential for language acquisition.

Several researchers note the lack of research investigating teachers' actual language use in the classroom and the factors that influence teachers' choice of language. Stern (1992) notes that this dearth of research may in itself be a function of the disagreement among members of the profession about the appropriateness of the use of English in classroom language instruction. A number of British foreign language educators (F. Chambers 1991; G. Chambers 1990; Harbord 1992) suggest that the language teaching profession will benefit from research examining why teachers employ

English in their classroom instruction and whether their limited use of English truly hinders students' acquisition of the target language. Some language educators who advocate the exclusive use of the target language also support this research. Duff and Polio (1990) and Polio and Duff (1994) maintain that such research is important because of the added understanding it will provide as to how and why teachers use English in their classrooms, which they believe will facilitate the development of alternatives to the use of English by foreign language teachers.

The present study is designed to examine qualitatively the beliefs and classroom practices of university TAs with regard to their language use, the congruence of these beliefs and practices, and the factors that influence the formation of these beliefs and practices. Few previous studies have attempted an examination of issues related to teaching assistants' language use. Until the profession has more detailed knowledge of the factors that influence teachers' language choice and of the contexts in which teachers use the two languages, it remains very difficult to determine how teachers' language use affects students' learning. Improved understanding of these issues will contribute to the profession's understanding of how teachers' language use affects classroom language learning and will enable teachers to use language to promote their own classroom goals.

## **The Interaction of Teachers' Beliefs and Practices**

Savignon (1991) notes that the beliefs and classroom practices of language teachers have not been closely examined by researchers in foreign language education. Johnson (1994) notes that researchers have heretofore failed to analyze the congruence of beliefs and practices of language teachers. Richards (1996) maintains that teachers must become aware of the "principles that inform their approach to teaching" (p. 281) if they are to understand the relationship between their beliefs and instructional practices. These principles, Richards suggests, are based on several factors: teachers' professional education, their professional experience, their belief systems, and cultural variables. Grossman (1990) adds to this list teachers' subject matter knowledge and their beliefs about their students.

Grossman (1990) and Nesper (1987) assert that emotions and memory may affect the formation of teachers' beliefs about teaching and teachers' views about different types of classroom practices. According to Nesper

“affect . . . can . . . be [an important regulator] of the amount of energy teachers will put into (classroom) activities and how they will expend energy on an activity” (1987, p. 320); Grossman (1990) confirms that “many of teachers’ ideas of how to teach particular topics can be traced back to their memories of how their own teachers approached these topics” (p. 10). Indeed, Pajares (1992) agrees that the formation of teachers’ professional beliefs commences at the time of their initial socialization into the educational system in early childhood. These ideas may originate with influential teachers early in a student’s career or with a critical experience during early schooling, resulting in a deep-seated memory that serves as a catalyst for the evolution of later teaching practices.

Johnson (1994) proposes that it is essential for researchers to examine the criteria used by language teachers in choosing to incorporate certain classroom practices if the profession is to enhance its understanding of the interaction of teachers’ beliefs and practices. Menges and Rando (1989) suggest that university TAs constitute an ideal population for research on teacher beliefs and practices, as well as noting that researchers have not previously examined this area to any extent. They propose that such research will enable TAs to recognize and rectify contradictions between their beliefs and instructional practices, to achieve consistency between beliefs and practices, and to develop original theories that promote the continued renewal of their instructional practices. Moreover, Menges and Kulieke (1984) note that students report greater satisfaction in classes where they perceive a clear relationship between TAs’ professed beliefs and classroom behaviors. Thus, an examination of these beliefs and practices appears to represent a fruitful area for inquiry.

## **Teachers’ Beliefs and Practices Regarding Their Classroom Language Use**

The beliefs and practices of university TAs with regard to their use of English and the target language in foreign language courses have been analyzed by Duff and Polio (1990), Guthrie (1984, 1987), Polio and Duff (1994), and Zéphir and Chirol (1993). Of these studies, that of Polio and Duff (1994) deals most extensively with the theme of beliefs and practices. These researchers argue against the use of English by teachers in the foreign language classroom on the basis that classroom use of the target language represents the only feasible source of input for second language

acquisition for most university students. Any use of English, Polio and Duff maintain, results in a reduction of classroom input in the target language, thus delaying language acquisition.

Polio and Duff found that many of the TAs in their study believe that exclusive or near-exclusive use of the target language by classroom teachers is the best way to help a learner acquire the language. However, all of the TAs whose classes Polio and Duff observed used English to some extent. The TAs maintained that they found the use of English in their classrooms important for several purposes. These purposes included the establishment of solidarity and empathy with students who felt anxiety when their TAs spoke exclusively in the target language, the translation into English of target language vocabulary unknown to the students, and the remedying of student incomprehension of the target language. The TAs in the Polio and Duff study also reported pressure to cover a large amount of course material in a short period of time, negative reactions of individual classes to the use of English as a native language by the TAs, the high level of difficulty of the material, and the limited amount of time available for class preparation as other factors that influenced their use of English in the classroom.

These findings parallel the contentions of Johnson (1994), who asserts that “here-and-now” considerations often take precedence over teachers’ attempts to incorporate their professed beliefs into their classroom instruction. She argues that issues of classroom management, control, and discipline overwhelm many language teachers. When teachers must devote their time and energy toward keeping their classes flowing smoothly, Johnson argues, they direct their teaching behaviors toward this goal, regardless of the theoretical orientations grounding their instructional behaviors. The TAs in the present study noted similar concerns.

## **Design of the Study**

### **Participants**

The four TAs participating in this study taught three distinct first-year university French courses. The textbook used was the second edition of *Voilà! An Introduction to French* (Heilenman, Kaplan, and Tournier 1992). Two of the TAs, Christophe and Caroline, were natives of France with six and seven years of teaching experience, respectively, at the time of the study. (Pseudonyms for the TAs are used throughout this chapter.) These TAs taught Elementary French Review, an intensive one-semester review of the



material normally presented in the two-semester Elementary French sequence. Students enrolled in the Elementary French Review course have normally studied French in the past, but have not attained a score on the placement test sufficient to allow them to qualify for enrollment in second-year courses. As indicated personally by Heilenman (1997), other students reportedly enroll in the course in order to complete the graduation requirement in foreign languages more quickly.

A third TA, Grant, a native speaker of American English, was in his first year of teaching at the time of the study. He taught the first semester of the two-semester Elementary French sequence. This course was designed for students who have never studied French prior to the enrollment in the course. The fourth TA, Sandra, came from a non-Francophone European country. She had taught Rhetoric (Freshman Composition) for two years prior to beginning to teach French, but was also in the first year of foreign language teaching at the time of the study. She taught the second semester of the two-semester Elementary French sequence.

### **Instrumentation**

This study incorporated data collection strategies from qualitative research paradigms in order to examine the TAs' beliefs and practices regarding their classroom language use. Data came from transcription and analysis of teachers' classroom language, questionnaires completed by the TAs, interviews conducted by the researcher in which the TAs discussed their beliefs and practices, and stimulated recall sessions in which the TAs viewed, with the researcher, a videotape of a lesson they had taught previously and commented upon their teaching and the factors that had influenced their instruction.

The narratives of the TAs yielded some findings that seemed to be at odds with the researcher's understanding of the goals of the Elementary French program. In order to reconcile these inconsistencies the professor who served as coordinator for the Elementary French program was interviewed to gain her perspectives on the issues raised by the TAs in the study. Data from this interview are incorporated at various points in the discussion of the study results.

### **Transcription and Analysis of the TAs' Classroom Language**

Analysis of the TAs' classroom language was begun by viewing each of the videotaped class sessions that comprised part of the data corpus. After

several viewings; class sessions were transcribed with general patterns of language use among the TAs being noted.

The notion of the *critical event* (Whitmore and Crowell 1994, Whitmore 1997, personal communication) informed the selection of specific examples of classroom language that illustrated the TAs' language use in this study. Whitmore and Crowell (1994) define the critical event as "small elements that nevertheless exemplify an amount of time, type of activity, or set of behaviors descriptive of daily life" (p. 6) in a classroom. For the present study the researcher and each teaching assistant collaborated to identify factors that shaped the teaching assistant's language use during the videotaped class session. Specific excerpts from the transcripts of each class session elucidate the factors thus identified. These excerpts are taken verbatim from the transcripts, and are given in the original language, whether English, French, or a combination of the two. Translations into English are supplied for those excerpts in French. All translations represent the work of the researcher.

## Questionnaire

Following the completion of the transcription and analysis of classroom language, the TAs completed questionnaires about their beliefs and practices regarding their target language use in instruction. Only one previous study identified (Zéphir and Chirol 1993) used a questionnaire to measure the attitudes of TAs toward target language use in the classroom. The questionnaire for the present study incorporated some parts of the instrument used by Zéphir and Chirol and in addition included other items that asked TAs to self-report about their use of the two languages in the classroom.

The new questionnaire examined several different domains, specifically, TAs' beliefs about the effects of their use of English in the classroom on students' language learning and TAs' views about the appropriateness of using English in classroom instruction of culture, grammar, and vocabulary, as well as its use in issuing administrative announcements about test dates, office hours, homework assignments, and the like. Other questionnaire items investigated TAs' beliefs about the effects of early formal language learning experiences on their beliefs and practices and examined the idea that teachers' linguistic ability may affect classroom practice. Other areas examined in the questionnaire included the extent to which student expectations for teachers' language use influenced classroom

practices, and whether TAs felt compelled to use French because of their course coordinator's insistence.

The questionnaire employed two types of rating scales to assess the various constructs represented in the instrument, graphic rating scales and Likert scales. Oppenheim (1966) describes the use of graphic rating scales, considering them useful for the collection of personal impressions and attitudes toward an issue and "where the differences between candidates are more important than . . . absolute figures" (p. 68), making the use of such scales ideal for qualitative research. Each scale contained five intervals, and at the two ends of the scale extreme positions were given to illustrate possible responses, as exemplified in the following sample item taken from the questionnaire:

I have difficulty expressing myself in French in my classroom.

1.....2.....3.....4.....5

Great difficulty

No difficulty

Likert scales (Oppenheim 1966) assessed the TAs' beliefs about their target language use in their classrooms. The respondents indicated whether they strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed, or strongly disagreed with a statement, or indicated uncertainty with regard to their attitudes toward the statement. For the purposes of this pilot study, no statistical analyses were performed on the questionnaire items using Likert scales due to the very small sample size ( $N = 4$ ). Instead, the TAs' responses to these items were considered in conjunction with the findings yielded by the transcriptions of class sessions, interviews, stimulated recall sessions, and graphic rating scales in order to assemble a more complete picture of their beliefs and practices regarding target language use in the classrooms. [See Appendix 1 for the questionnaire.]

### **Interview Protocols for TAs and First-year Coordinator**

Once the TAs had completed the questionnaire, the researcher interviewed each teaching assistant in order to gain additional perspectives on their instructional beliefs and practices. The researcher first constructed an interview guide that centered on issues deemed relevant to the study: TAs' language learning backgrounds, their perceptions of their strengths and weaknesses as instructors, factors that influenced their decisions to teach French, their perceptions of their own classroom practices and the factors that influenced these practices, and other professional experiences that the

TAs found relevant and wished to discuss. These factors have been suggested as influencing the professional development of language teachers by Freeman (1991a, 1991b, 1991c) and Johnson (1992a, 1992b, 1994, 1996). Interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed, and areas of consistency and inconsistency between the TAs' questionnaire responses and interview data identified. The interviews also helped to establish areas for further discussion in the stimulated recall sessions discussed below. [See Appendix 2 for the interview guide.] An interview protocol was also constructed for use in interviewing the first-year course coordinator. [See Appendix 3 for this protocol.]

### **Stimulated Recall Sessions**

In the second phase of the interview, the researcher viewed each videotaped class with the teaching assistant who taught the class, using the technique of *stimulated recall* (Nunan 1992) in which instructors view a previously taught lesson and comment upon their teaching and the factors that influenced their instruction at the time of the videotaping. While, in some cases, as much as two years had passed between the videotaped class observation and the stimulated recall, the TAs never indicated that this delay presented any problem in recalling the details of the class sessions. To the contrary, they indicated through their comments and observations that the class sessions remained very fresh in their minds. Although the TAs had the opportunity to view the videotape without the researcher's presence prior to the simulated recall session, none chose to do so. However, all TAs did review the transcripts of their classes prior to the sessions. In reviewing the transcripts, the researcher asked the TAs to focus on their language use and to consider what factors may have influenced their language choice at given points during the class. In this way, the TAs provided the researcher with additional data with which he could begin to examine the degree of congruence between their observed practices and their self-reported beliefs and descriptions of their classroom practices.

### **The TAs' Class Sessions**

Summaries of the classes of the TAs follow. Christophe, a French national, is presented first, followed by Sandra, a non-native speaker of French who comes from a non-Francophone European country. Third comes another native of France, Caroline. Grant, a native speaker of American English, is the final teaching assistant whose class is discussed. Excerpts from the class

transcripts are presented verbatim, then translated into English if necessary. All translations are in bold.

*Christophe.* Christophe's Elementary French Review class included three activities: an activity taken from the textbook that reviewed vocabulary, a review of a previously assigned reading from the textbook, and a deductive presentation of French reflexive and pronominal verbs. Slightly more than 52% of his classroom talk took place in French. He generally used English to give instructions for activities, to make introductory explanations, and to explain grammar. His use of French served to reinforce points he had previously made in English, and to illustrate grammatical structures he had explained in English.

He explained his use of English to issue directives by saying that he had to use English in order to ensure that the students understood how to proceed with a given activity and that doing this eliminated the need for student questions that would have consumed valuable class time. In the following exchange from the textbook vocabulary activity, he repeated each French lexical item in the series and asked the students to repeat. At the end of the series he then used English to make sure that the student would understand how to respond [T = teacher; Ss = students].

*T: s'aimer*

*Ss: s'aimer*

*T: se séparer*

*Ss: se séparer*

*T: se disputer*

*Ss: se disputer*

*T: divorcer*

*Ss: divorcer*

*T: OK, which word does not fit here? Julie?*

*S: s'aimer*

**T: To love one another**

**Ss: To love one another**

**T: To separate**

**Ss: To separate**

**T: To argue**

**Ss: To argue**

**T: To divorce**

**Ss: To divorce**

**T: OK, which word does not fit here? Julie?**

**S: To love one another**

Christophe frequently spoke in English when presenting information about grammar. In an explanatory presentation of reflexive verbs, he used English to present the material and French to illustrate the explanations:

**T: Which auxiliary are you always going to use with reflexive verbs in the *passé composé*?**

**S: Être.** [*Être* is the auxiliary verb meaning **to be**.]

**T: Être. C'est ça.** OK, that's the first rule, use *être*. OK, this one, *hier, je me suis lavé*. (**Yesterday I washed myself.**)

You have a number of elements you must not forget: the subject, the reflexive object, the auxiliary, the past participle.

He explained that he used English in the context above in order to make sure that the students grasped the concept he was explaining. He placed great importance on the idea that students must have a firm command of grammar rules before they begin to speak. The best way to help students to do so was to present the rules in English, the language they know best.

**Sandra.** Sandra, who comes from a non-Francophone European country, acknowledged that her language teachers from her native country greatly influenced her teaching practices. Her teachers reportedly used a great deal of her native language in their teaching and emphasized the mastery of grammar rather than development of the ability to communicate. She stated that she recognized the importance of her students' learning to develop this ability because of her own language learning background, which did not prioritize learning to communicate in the target language. As a result, she tried to emphasize communication in her classes, although she admitted she found it difficult to do so. In many cases, she chose to teach about, rather than with, the target language because it apparently came more naturally to her.

Sandra's second-semester Elementary French class can be divided into two parts. During the first half of the class, she endeavored to lead the class in a series of discussions whose themes were suggested in the textbook: politics, racism, morality, and students' dreams and fears. Afterward, she led the class in a deductive presentation of the subjunctive mood in French and a review of the imperative mood and future and conditional tenses. She followed with various textbook activities designed to allow students to practice the use of these grammatical structures.

The following question was typical of those Sandra used to stimulate class discussion:

**T:** *Est-ce que vous vous intéressez à la politique? Oui ou non, et pourquoi? Pensez-y et dites-moi si vous vous intéressez à la politique.*

**Are you interested in politics? Yes or no, and why? Think about it and tell me whether you are interested in politics.**

Sandra's students responded to such questions with brief answers in French, and Sandra then tried to encourage the other students to expand upon the initial response. When the students demonstrated reluctance to do so, she took it upon herself to further the discussion by volunteering her own views on the issue, still in French. The students usually remained silent. Sandra then asked a student to translate her question into English to verify that the class had understood it. The student then summarized Sandra's points accurately in English. Sandra usually elected not to pursue the question and moved to her next query, thus re-initiating the series of questions and responses. The exchange below exemplifies this type of exchange. At this point, the class was still discussing politics.

**S:** *Oui je t'intéresse à la politique?* [sic].

**T:** *Oui je m'intéresse à la politique—pourquoi?*

**S:** *Parce que je suis idéaliste.*

**T:** *Parce que tu es idéaliste. Bon, bon. La classe? est-ce que vous croyez que Phil est idéaliste? Est-ce qu'il dit la vérité? Est-ce que vous croyez qu'il est idéaliste? Vous ne le connaissez pas très bien, mais est-ce que vous croyez qu'il est idéaliste?*

**S:** *Oui parce qu'il dit qu'il est idéaliste.*

**T:** *Oui puisqu'il dit qu'il est idéaliste, il faut le croire. Bon. Mais si les actions?*

*de Phil sont les actions d'un idéaliste, est-ce qu'il est vraiment idéaliste? Ce qu'il fait, ce que Phil fait n'est pas ce qu'on fait quand on est idéaliste, est-ce qu'il est vraiment idéaliste?*

S: (Silence)

T: *Est-ce que quelqu'un peut me traduire en anglais?*

S: If his actions are not idealistic then is he an idealist?

S: (non sequitur)

T: **Yes I am interested in politics—why?**

S: **Because I am idealistic.**

T: **Because you are idealistic, good, good. Class, do you believe that Phil is idealistic? Is he telling the truth? Do you believe that he is idealistic? You don't know him very well, but do you believe that he is idealistic?**

S: **Yes, because he says that he is idealistic.**

T: **Yes, since he says that he is idealistic, we must believe him, but if Phil's actions, the actions of an idealistic person, is he really idealistic? What he does, what Phil does, is not what an idealistic person does when a person is idealistic. Is he really idealistic?**

Ss: (silence)

T: **Can someone translate into English for me?**

S: If his actions are not idealistic, then is he an idealist?

Sandra later admitted that “I don't think the students were ready for this lesson, and the class was generally unresponsive. They were not engaged in the lesson at all.” She said she attempted to establish situations where students would want to talk. However, she encountered difficulty doing so because she found communicative language teaching “a very tricky situation.”

For the second half of her class, she acknowledged that she deviated from her original plan because she perceived she was having little success with the discussion and because she felt more secure teaching grammar. She used English consistently to talk about the structures under consideration. Often she used the lecture mode to transmit information.

T: The basic use of the subjunctive in French is, there's no other way to say in French: I want him to do that, I would like him to study more.



Exactly, the literal meaning of “what I want you” to is the subjunctive mood in French. So and also, what’s implied here is he doesn’t want me to do that. What’s implied here is that he has a certain idea about what I’m doing. He doesn’t want me to do this, some sort of a judgment if . . . it’s the intricacies of French tense and mood, you know all these little things that happen within the tense.

Sandra reserved the use of French to produce verb forms and other linguistic structures in isolation. She frequently called upon students to produce these forms to illustrate formation of verb paradigms, as in the following demonstration of the imperfect tense in French:

**T:** OK, you take the first person plural of the *indicatif présent* (present indicative) you chop off this and you stick the ending on OK, what’s the other ending: *nous parl-*

**S:** *nous parlions* (we used to speak)

**T:** *vous*

**S:** *vous parliez* (you used to speak)

Sandra asserted that she would like to be able to use French more extensively in her classroom, but that she found it difficult for several reasons. As a result, English had evolved as her normal language use by “default—when all the other alternatives fail, when we’re running out of time, when a test is coming, and I need to present English in order to save time for other activities.”

*Caroline.* Among the four classes videotaped for the present study, Caroline’s students in her Elementary French Review class arguably had the greatest overt influence on the activities their teaching assistant incorporated into the class and on her language use in general. While she agreed that “in a perfect situation, exclusive use of the target language at a level accessible to the students” represented the ideal way to teach, she asserted that she found such language use rarely feasible in actual classroom contexts. She reported feeling troubled by her students’ attitudes toward French and toward her use of the French in class. Students reportedly complained that they could not understand her French at all, although to an observer her language use seemed clear, direct, and easily comprehensible. She admitted that she had difficulty asserting authority in her classroom,

even with students whose behavior was aberrant, because she considered such actions on her part to be at odds with the establishment of a relaxed classroom environment. "The teacher's attitude is important to motivate students for language study," she maintained.

Caroline described her class as "a terrible class; the worst." She found the students generally "immature, with motivation zero," and she asserted that the students customarily showed no inclination to cooperate with her. She said of them, "I wouldn't wish this group on anyone, especially if it was their first class; I told [the course supervisor] that if this had been my first class I would have quit right then and there." The videotape captured the uncooperative attitudes of the students, who were heard to make comments such as "We only have to do two, right?" "Do we have to do this on paper?" "Do we have to write the whole sentence?" "Is this all that's going to be on the test?" and so forth. At other points, the students admitted that they could not participate in activities because they had not prepared for class.

One type of activity used by Caroline to maintain use of the target language required students to contribute one-word responses to her statements, whereby students stated the object pronoun they would use to replace the phrase under consideration in the sentence. Caroline enjoyed the greatest success in maintaining use of the target language during these exercises.

*T: Les étudiants détestent les examens.*

*S: Les.*

*T: OK, les parents couchent les enfants à 6h.*

*S: Se?*

*T: Se OK. Ces personnes jouent avec ma sœur et moi.*

*S: Nous.*

*T: Nous OK.*

**T: Students hate the tests.**

*S: Les.*

**T: OK, parents put their children to bed at 6:00.**

*S: Se?*

**T: Se OK. Those people play with my sister and me.**

*S: Nous.*

*T: Nous OK.*

One advantage to this type of activity, as noted by Caroline, was that it was easier to keep the students on task because students easily grasped her expectations for the activity, and possible student responses were quite restricted, meaning that they did not ask many questions. When Caroline asked the students to explain their responses, however, they switched to English. She followed their lead.

*T: On téléphone à nos amis?*

*S: Leur?*

*T: OK, leur, voilà. On leur téléphone. Pourquoi?*

*S: Indirect, because of the à.*

*T: Oui, because of the à, indirect.*

*S: So à makes it an indirect object.*

*T: Hmmhmm, indirect.*

***T: We call our friends on the telephone?***

*S: Leur?*

***T: OK, leur, there it is. We call them. Why?***

*S: Indirect, because of the à.*

*T: Yes, because of the à, indirect.*

*S: So à makes it an indirect object.*

*T: Hmmhmm, indirect.*

Caroline asserted that it was important for her to use English in order to make French grammar clear to her students. She said she would have preferred not to include so many grammatical activities in her class; indeed, she termed her videotaped class “boring” because of the perceived preponderance of activities related to the structure of French. However, she maintained that students had to understand grammatical concepts because the course exams assessed grammatical knowledge to a large extent, and that it was easier for the students to comprehend when she explained in English.

As the class progressed, the students showed an increasing tendency to use English and to demonstrate uncooperative attitudes toward Caroline. This was true even when the activities were not grammatically based, as in the following reading activity:

*T: OK. De quelle nationalité est Harlem Désir?*

- S: North American.  
 T: *Non, en français.*  
 S: *Nord quoi?*  
 T: *Américain du nord. Non, il n'est pas américain.*  
 S: *Martiniquais.*  
 T: *Non uh presque...*  
 S: *Français.*  
 T: *Français. Il est français.*  
 S: Is this guy famous?  
 T: *Oui.*  
 S: Is he an actor?  
 T: *C'est dans le texte!*  
 S: I didn't read the text.  
 T: **What nationality is Harlem Désir?**  
 S: North American.  
 T: **No, in French.**  
 S: **North what?**  
 T: **North American. No, he's not American.**  
 S: **From Martinique.**  
 T: **No, uh, almost . . .**  
 S: **French.**  
 T: **He's French.**  
 S: Is this guy famous?  
 T: **Yes.**  
 S: Is he an actor?  
 T: **It's in the text!**  
 S: I didn't read the text.

The students' reactions influenced Caroline to use a number of activities such as the following, in which they repeated words from a vocabulary list contained in the textbook as Caroline read them aloud. She perceived the value of these activities as keeping the students on-task while maintaining their use of French:

*T: OK, OK, alors à la page 366. Oui 366, 366, qu'est-ce qui se passe? Allez un mot par personne. Le premier mot 366? Le vocabulaire, un mot par personne.*

*S: OK, le cours.*

*T: Le cours.*

*T: Paul?*

*S: Le divorce.*

*T: Le divorce.*

*T: Greg?*

*S: La fin.*

*T: La fin.*

**T: OK, OK, then to page 366. Yes 366, 366, what's going on? Let's go— one word per person. The first word 366? Vocabulary one word per person.**

**S: OK, the course.**

**T: The course.**

**T: Paul?**

**S: The divorce.**

**T: The divorce.**

**T: Greg?**

**S: The end.**

**T: The end.**

While Caroline asserted that the role of English in her classroom should be limited, she found it difficult to put this idea into practice during this particular class. It was easier for her to maintain the use of French when the students did not use English themselves, as in drills and exercises in which their options for responding to Caroline's linguistic cues were limited. In activities that required students to have prepared for class or that called upon them to create with the language, they were often unable or unwilling to do so, thus hampering Caroline's attempts to use French in her classroom.

*Grant.* Grant was the only teaching assistant who was teaching a section of the first-semester Elementary French course at the time of the videotaping.

He did not rely on grammar for most of his class content and he also used more French than any of his colleagues participating in this study. Indeed, when Grant or the students introduced grammar as a topic, they used more English than at other times. Grant acknowledged that he found it easier to use French in his classroom when he avoided discussions about grammar. The course coordinator added during her interview that the first-semester course emphasized development of communicative ability rather than grammatical knowledge. Moreover, she noted that the grammatical structures presented in that course tended to be less complex than in the second-semester course.

Grant employed several techniques in order to maintain the use of French. His language was simple, with short sentences and careful, although not unnatural, enunciation. He relied on vocabulary and concrete topics already known to the students and made frequent use of display questions. He used English for limited, specific purposes, such as responding to a question after several unsuccessful attempts to do so in French. He then returned to French.

Questions used to stimulate discussion in French were simply phrased and featured similar structures from one query to the next: *De quelle couleur est ta chemise?* (What color is your shirt?), *De quelle couleur sont tes chaussettes?* (What color are your socks?), and the like. After student responses, Grant reiterated the students' correct responses and used indirect correction to remedy problems, maintaining use of the target language.

At another point he asked students to form groups of three to describe photos that he distributed. Grant stated that he often asked students to work in groups, "where students depend on and pay attention to one another." In this way, he maintained that students were more likely to use French in order to complete a task or obtain information on some question. During the activity, he provided students with basic questions in French to facilitate description of the photos: *quel âge a-t-elle?* (how old is she?), *qu'est-ce qu'il fait?* (what is he doing?), *qu'est-ce qu'il porte?* (what is he wearing?), and so forth. While students worked, he circulated and continued to prompt with questions. Upon forming a group of the whole once again, students shared their descriptions. Grant followed up the descriptions with other questions that motivated further student participation:

S: *Elle est la maison blanche* [sic].

T: *Elle a la maison blanche.*

- S: *Oui.*
- T: *Elle a une maison blanche, elle a une maison blanche, elle est dans la maison blanche avec Bill Clinton?*
- S: *Oui, elle est avec Bill Clinton.*
- T: *Ah, ça va. Elle s'appelle Hillary? Elle s'appelle Hillary?*
- S: *Non elle s'appelle what's Hillary's daughter (laughter from the class)?*
- T: *Elle s'appelle Chelsea. Ah, ça va.*
- S: **She is the White House [sic].**
- T: **She has a white house.**
- S: **Yes.**
- T: **She has a white house, she has a white house, she is in the White House with Bill Clinton?**
- S: **Yes, she is with Bill Clinton.**
- T: **Ah good, is her name Hillary? Is her name Hillary?**
- T: **No, her name is, what's Hillary's daughter? (Laughter from the class)**
- T: **Her name's Chelsea, ah good.**

Discussions about French syntax in the class encouraged student questions in English. Grant normally tried to respond in French to the questions. However, when the students persisted with further questions, he sometimes reverted to English to bring closure to the discussions.

- T: *La dernière question: On invite les cousines à avoir un verre ce soir? Shall we invite the cousins to have a drink this evening? Oui, non, comme tu veux.* When they're using *on* they know what they mean, it could be we or you or a person, it's sort of like a catchall.
- S: So how do you know?
- T: *Le contexte.*
- S: So if it's we, why wouldn't it be *invitons* or whatever?
- T: *Parce qu'on, c'est singulier: il vend, elle vend, on vend, c'est toujours troisième singulier.*
- S: So what all does *on* mean then?
- T: We, one, people, a person, you: *beaucoup de choses, plusieurs choses.*

**T: The last question:** *On invite les cousines à avoir un verre ce soir?* Shall we invite the cousins to have a drink this evening? **Yes, no, as you wish.** When they're using *on* they know what they mean, it could be we or you or a person, it's sort of like a catchall.

**S:** So how do you know?

**T: The context.**

**S:** So if it's we, why wouldn't it be *invitons* or whatever?

**T: Because *on* is singular: he sells, she sells, one sells, it's always third (person) singular.**

**S:** So what all does *on* mean then?

**T:** We one people a person you, **a lot of things, several things.**

Positive student motivation and the establishment of situations in the classroom where students would need to use French to complete a task were important considerations for Grant. Grant cited his ability "to promote a relaxed atmosphere in the classroom and to establish good attitudes among students about [French]" as one of his strengths as a teacher. His ultimate goal was "the creation of an immersion setting in the classroom, even if . . . informal, and helping students to learn to cope with different kinds of situations in French."

## Discussion

Certain patterns and themes related to the TAs' beliefs and practices regarding their classroom language use emerged during the review and analysis of the data yielded by the transcriptions of classroom language, questionnaires, interviews, and stimulated recall sessions. The TAs generally agreed that, ideally, they should use French exclusively in their classrooms. However, they identified several factors that, in their view, made the exclusive use of the target language problematic. These factors fall into three categories: those that relate to the TAs' language learning experiences, those that relate to their professional development experiences, and those that relate to the curriculum and the nature of the students enrolled in the program.

### The Effects of the TAs' Language Learning Experiences

The TAs reported that their own language teachers engaged in many instructional behaviors that they regarded as problematic. Grossman (1990)



suggests that teachers' instructional practices are often strongly influenced by their remembrances of the way in which their own teachers taught. Among the behaviors the TAs in this study identified was the extensive use by their teachers of the students' native language in classroom instruction. Only Grant, the American teaching assistant, recounted that most of his language teachers used the target language for communication in the classroom. Christophe, one of the native-speaking TAs, reported recalling "no real conversation between students and teachers" in the target language in his language classes. He remembered his classes as featuring large amounts of grammatical analysis of sentences written on the chalkboard and "lots of vocabulary and discrete elements [of English]." Caroline confirmed that her own teachers used French extensively in the classroom, and emphasized memorization of English vocabulary and grammar rules. She related that in nine years of language study she never found herself in a classroom situation in which she had to speak English communicatively. According to Sandra, the teaching assistant from a non-Francophone European country, her teachers used her native language almost exclusively in the classroom and relied on grammatical analysis and *explication de texte* for their instructional content.

The TAs expressed varying opinions about the effect of their teachers' instructional practices on their own teaching. The foreign language teachers in Grant's case reportedly served as positive models for him to emulate, although he singled out for censure those who "reacted with severe discipline when students made mistakes" in classes. Christophe stated that he did not believe that his teachers had made a great impact on the formation of his beliefs and practices but conceded that generally "my teachers have not been the best role models for my own teaching." Similarly, Caroline acknowledged that, for her, a generally negative impression of her own teachers has persisted although she denied having thought that "oh, this is what they did in junior high and I don't want to do that." She reported that her recollection that her own language study "[was] not fun" troubled her deeply, and she asserted that "the teacher's attitude is important to motivate students for language study."

But the most consistent—and most negative—impressions of former language teachers were expressed by Sandra. She described her instructors as "authoritarian, spiteful, intimidating, degrading, and dismal teachers with absolutely no idea of how to teach the language," criticizing in particular one teacher "who used to grab our jaws and manipulate them to

produce French sounds whenever we mispronounced them . . . [The classes featured] no relationship at all among the teachers and the students or even among the students. There was no sense of group, and the classes were very alien.” At the same time, Sandra admitted that she sometimes found herself reproducing the behaviors of her own teachers, which emphasized the use of the students’ native language to teach about the structural features of French, simply because “my [language] teachers established patterns that I have found very hard to break.”

Indeed, the TAs who harbored negative memories of their own language learning nevertheless indicated that they often struggled against the same tendencies they attributed to their teachers. While Sandra lamented what she considered the undue emphasis her own teachers reportedly placed on the mastery of French grammar, she acknowledged that she often fell back on the teaching of linguistic structures in her own instruction because she felt more comfortable doing so. “I don’t want to brag,” she said, “but my knowledge of [French] grammar is excellent.” Moreover, when Sandra presented grammatical structures during her videotaped class, she did so almost entirely in the students’ native language, just as she said her own teachers had.

Christophe recounted that many of his teachers had placed what he considered undue emphasis on students’ producing language that was perfectly accurate and remembered one teacher who “embarrassed students by reading aloud to the class . . . [their] assignments he considered unsatisfactory.” For this reason he said that he tried hard to show an encouraging attitude toward students and not to emphasize linguistic accuracy unduly in his teaching, but he acknowledged that it often required a very conscious effort on his own part to do so because of his own language learning background. He described himself as sometimes “too pushy” in the classroom and said that he often found himself “wanting everything to be perfect.” He also reported that his teachers generally operated under the idea that it was important for students to understand grammatical rules before beginning to speak and so presented rules in the students’ native language in order to ensure that they understood them. This notion is one that Christophe acknowledged has persisted in his own teaching. He explained that he himself presented grammar in English for this reason—to ensure that his students understood grammatical rules before asking them to speak.

## The TAs' Views of Their Methodological Preparation

The TAs stated that they felt restricted by limitations in their pre-professional methodological preparation. They asserted that they would have benefited from more extensive work in language teaching methodology that would have prepared them for the realities of the classroom. While all the TAs had very positive words for the course coordinator and her approach to supervision of the Elementary French program, their views of the actual course work they had completed prior to teaching were somewhat less positive. It should also be noted that in the interview with the course coordinator, she did not support several of the TAs' observations about their course work in methodology.

Sandra, Caroline, and Grant all completed the same course in methodology at the institution where they were teaching, albeit with different instructors. The TAs contended that the quality of instruction in the course varied because, from year to year, different professors with disparate attitudes about the importance of target language use in the classroom alternated teaching the course. They asserted that these attitudes did not always correspond to the philosophy of target language use espoused by the Elementary French course coordinator. In particular, Grant maintained that his methodology instructor "strongly emphasized the importance of exclusive target language use" without ever detailing how TAs might go about doing this, thus making it problematic for them to avoid using English in their instruction. Caroline went so far as to cast doubt on the overall value of the course she completed because "you are taught one method in class and then each teaching assistant goes and teaches the way they feel most comfortable anyway."

The course coordinator acknowledged that the content of the methodology course varies from year to year depending on the instructor. According to the coordinator, the course serves TAs from a variety of departments: Chinese, English as a Second Language, French, German, Japanese, Linguistics, and Russian. Not all the methodology instructors come from the same department, and each instructor reportedly brings the focus of his or her department to the course. While the French department espouses what the course coordinator terms a "student-centered" approach to teaching, her counterparts in other departments may espouse a more "teacher-centered" approach that affects their philosophy of target language use. For this reason TAs who enroll in the same course

in different years may not be exposed to the same material, nor is it certain that they will receive the same perspective.

Several of the TAs lamented the lack of practical knowledge included in the methodology courses they completed. Tedick and Walker (1994, 1995) note the historical tendency of such courses to emphasize the acquisition of theoretical knowledge about teaching as opposed to preparing teachers to present instruction in the target language in the classroom. While these researchers' focus is the secondary classroom, their observation holds true for the university classroom as well.

Christophe, who completed a single course in methodology at the institution where he began his doctoral studies, reported that his course emphasized "theory over practice" and did not prepare him adequately for the classroom. Sandra reported that she completed a course in methodology at a university in her home country, as well as courses in phonetics, morphology, and other related fields. While she took these courses in preparation for a teaching career in language, she asserted that she has not found this course work particularly helpful at all. She stated furthermore that she wished that her methodology course at her present university had emphasized practical aspects of teaching such as use of the textbook. Such knowledge, she maintained, would have helped her to use the target language more effectively in her teaching.

### **The Influence of the Elementary French Curriculum on the TAs' Language Use**

The TAs named a number of factors related to the first-year Elementary French curriculum that they believed impacted on their classroom language use. Their perception was that they had to cover a great deal of material in a limited amount of time. The limited amount of time at their disposal for planning their classes also reportedly influenced their language use. Furthermore, for several reasons they believed that the students found much of this material quite complex. Their perceptions of the quantity and complexity of material to be covered influenced them to use English in their classes. This finding parallels the findings of Duff and Polio (1990) and Polio and Duff (1994) who note that the TAs in their studies cite similar concerns to justify their own use of English in classroom instruction.

## Covering the Material

All four TAs lamented the amount of material they felt must be presented. They were concerned with presenting the material as efficiently as possible in order to cover it completely. The use of English was necessary, in their view, in order for them to achieve such a presentation. According to Grant, this situation was largely the function of the need to “complete the stated department goals: cover X material during the semester, cover these structures, show these videos, get the students ready for the tests.” For Grant, the issue of time meant that he was not always able to use French as much as he would have liked. He said he felt compelled to use English because of the need to cover material as economically as possible.

Christophe and Caroline, who both taught the Elementary French Review course in which they must present in one semester all of the material otherwise presented in the two-semester Elementary French sequence, were especially vehement about the limitations imposed on them by the lack of time available. Caroline said that she tried to limit the amount of English she used in the classroom. But she suggested as well that her use of English was valid when “it helps students understand the material so they can go home and do the homework, even if there’s lots of vocabulary they don’t know.” Christophe described the primary student population for the review course as students who have studied French in high school but who have not scored well enough on the language placement test to qualify for enrollment in second-year courses. He attributed student performance to inadequacies in their previous preparation in French and to negative attitudes toward language study generally. These factors reportedly made it difficult for him to use French more extensively in his teaching. Christophe stated that “even though [the first-year review course] is supposed to be review, the material after [Chapter] 12 is [usually] actually new to the students.” He thus found his work as a teacher doubly difficult: to students who had demonstrated low motivation for and a record of low achievement in language study, he had to present unfamiliar material at a pace faster than that of the regular two-semester Elementary French sequence. He maintained that he had to use English to present this material to compensate for the students’ limitations.

## Time

Furthermore, the TAs asserted that the amount of time at their disposal for planning their classes was very limited, due to the need to

devote time to their graduate studies. A review of the literature revealed no previous studies related to this theme. Sandra reported that “the need to keep up with course work limits the time for planning. The [French] department is adamant about getting people out in the minimum amount of time, even as the need for financial aid obliges us to teach in order to survive.” Furthermore, she contended that the twenty hours per week which TAs are contractually obligated to devote to their teaching is “inadequate when you spend ten hours per week in class [the load for a teaching assistant who teaches two courses per semester], plus the responsibilities of planning, grading, correcting exams, office hours, attending meetings, and all the rest.” The lack of planning time for the TAs meant that they felt compelled to use many activities that called upon them to use English, such as grammatical explanations and already designed textbook activities, because the use of such activities obviated the need for extensive pre-planning. The TAs acknowledged that they sometimes used such activities despite understanding that they may not have been the best for their students’ language learning. In particular, Sandra reported being plagued by “a nagging fear with each activity that this is going to bore my students out of their wits.”

## Grammar

The TAs reported that their students often found the material presented in the Elementary French program quite complex. They attributed some of the difficulties they faced in integrating more use of French to the reportedly low academic achievement of their students. In addition, the TAs asserted that the perceived level of complexity of the material made more extensive use of French problematic in classroom instruction. This was especially true for grammar instruction and the teaching of cultural material, which represented two areas in which the TAs found it most challenging to use French. They also often used English to remedy their students’ incomprehension of the TAs’ French, and to issue directions, instructions, and administrative announcements.

Grammar represented one area in which the TAs frequently used English. Grant maintained that the amount of English he used is a direct function of the extent to which he discusses grammar in his classroom. Moreover, he contended that “talk in English about grammar encourages students to talk in English,” which in turn stimulated more use of English on his part. Grammatical discussions in Sandra’s class took place almost

entirely in English. She and Christophe proposed that students' lack of knowledge about grammar in general contributes to the almost insurmountable difficulty they face when trying to present grammar in French, and, for this reason, they chose to present it in English. The TAs expressed some ambivalence about having to teach grammar. They all reported that the course coordinator encouraged them not to present grammar in class, but rather to direct the students to read the grammatical explanations in the textbook, which are given in English. The TAs did not find this alternative satisfactory, generally because they found that the course exams (written by the course coordinator) largely assessed students' understanding of French grammar.

The course coordinator presented other perspectives on the issue of her TAs' grammar teaching. She doubted that students' inability to comprehend grammar was related to the TAs' use of the target language. She suggested instead that the difficulty experienced by students in trying to comprehend their TAs' explanations of grammar lay in the fact that the TAs had not yet learned to present grammar in such a way that the explanations were transparent to the students. "Students would have difficulty understanding—in English *or* French—many presentations of grammar [that I have seen]," reported the coordinator. Rather, she believed that the ability to explain grammar transparently comes with experience, which the TAs were still in the process of acquiring.

Moreover, she asserted that the tendency shown by the TAs to emphasize the teaching of grammar had its roots in the fact that the TAs felt more comfortable teaching about the structure of the language because they knew it best, and because, as students of the language themselves, grammar interested them. The course coordinator denied that the exams privileged knowledge of grammar more than other facets of language. The exams contained "a cloze passage, true/false questions based on a cultural reading, a picture or drawing that the students had to describe in writing, and a short translation section that focused on memorization of idiomatic expressions." Nowhere were there "fill-in-the-blank sections," nor did the exams contain sections that evaluated students' knowledge of "verb forms in isolation."

## Culture

Teaching the target culture in the target language represented another area of difficulty for TAs. They maintained that students' lack of prior

knowledge of, and misconceptions about, this material compounded these difficulties. In addition, the abstract nature of many concepts related to culture made it problematic for them to use the target language in instruction. Christophe proposed that the difficulties he encountered in teaching about French culture are magnified by students' lack of any previously established knowledge base about the culture and by misconceptions and stereotypes that the students harbored. Sandra cited this view, citing "the lack of cross-cultural awareness" from which American students generally suffer. The TAs felt compelled to use English to address erroneous notions about Francophone cultures.

### **Establishing Comprehension**

When students expressed incomprehension of the TAs' French, the TAs often used English to remedy the misunderstandings. Caroline employed English at several points to repeat information she had previously given in French, particularly with regard to grammar. When Sandra failed to elicit student participation during class discussions, she asked the students to translate the discussion topics (supplied in the textbook) into English in order to ensure that they had understood. She also asked students to translate into English model sentences she had presented to illustrate various points of grammar. Grant used English on several occasions when his attempts to communicate in French failed, and admitted that "when students do not have the language to comprehend I will use English." Nevertheless, the course coordinator contended that there were ways to remedy incomprehension that did not involve the use of English. Once again, she maintained that this was an issue that would resolve itself as the TAs gained additional classroom experience.

In the TAs' classrooms, English was also commonly the language used for issuing directions and instructions and making administrative announcements about test dates, office hours, explication of test content and procedures for evaluation of student work, and the like. The course coordinator believed that these situations represented ideal contexts for the use of French because students have great motivation to try to comprehend in order to comply with class requirements. However, the TAs often used English in these situations. Caroline reported that her students would insist on the use of English when making such announcements, going so far as to ask for the repetition of the information in English if first presented in French. Christophe attributed English use in this context to the



need for students to comprehend directions for activities in order to complete them successfully, and to the premium on time in the classroom that made it important for students to understand instructions without having to clarify them or to answer questions about them. Sandra proposed that the use of English was helpful for lowering levels of student anxiety in the classroom, which she considered integral to “helping [the students] comprehend French more easily in reading comprehension, grammar, and vocabulary activities.” Generally, Grant maintained that it was “beyond expectations that students would understand everything said to them by teachers in native-like French.”

### **Student Characteristics**

Indeed, the TAs’ perceptions of their students exerted great influence on their language use in the classroom. Generally the TAs felt that students were not academically prepared for college-level work. Students’ reported past records of (low) achievement in language study also disturbed the TAs. It was difficult to use the target language extensively in the classroom, maintained the TAs, because the students were simply not capable of comprehending it.

Sandra said that she found her students generally “unbelievably unprepared in terms of academic skills necessary for college success,” and she noted on their part “a lack of initiative, a lack of engagement.” She often felt constrained pedagogically by what “[her] students could not or would not do in class.” Grant acknowledged that “the presence of students of low caliber” in his classroom often compelled him to use English simply to ensure that students could understand, and that he frequently did not teach in the way he wished he could because of students’ inability to cope linguistically. Caroline made several references to students who were unable to participate in class activities because of their limited ability in French. A primary goal for her teaching during the videotaped class, she admitted, was to maintain order and to keep her students occupied.

The course coordinator proposed an alternate explanation for many of the problems attributed by TAs to students’ lack of motivation, poor preparation, and performance. TAs, she stated, “have a tendency to blame students and a lack of student motivation when things are not going well in their classes.” They struggle with these issues because they “have not generally mastered the techniques [needed to] restructure classes in order to deal with these issues.” The coordinator does not believe that TAs generally

found their classes problematic. While she acknowledged that there are certain classes that she described as “black holes” that “take all your energy and give nothing back,” a category to which Caroline’s class may belong, she also believed that most students made an effort to cooperate in the classroom and that their TAs did not find it difficult to work with them.

## Conclusions and Implications

The TAs’ struggles to use the target language in their classrooms were marked by conflict—conflict with the goals of the first-year French curriculum, with their students, with their methodology instructors, and with the persons who served as their original models for language teaching. Moreover, the TAs also experienced internal conflict. They acknowledged that they found their language use inadequate, but felt constrained by factors beyond their control in their efforts to increase the amount of French they used. It is possible to interpret their use of English in the classroom as one way of mediating these conflicts.

The TAs questioned how realistic it was to expect them to cover the amount of material included in the first-year French curriculum. For them it was troublesome to use French to introduce thoroughly and clearly all the linguistic and cultural information expected in their courses, especially when their students were not able to cope with such language use. Moreover, they were troubled by the difficulty they faced in presenting new material to students who may have lacked any background schema to help them comprehend it. They viewed their use of English in this context as facilitating the presentation of material that would otherwise be unfeasible with the use of the target language.

Their use of English also enabled them to mediate conflicts with their students. Students reportedly viewed their performance on course exams as a chief measure of evaluating the instruction of their TAs, who, in turn, claimed to feel pressure and resentment from students when they perceived that class presentations had not adequately prepared them for course exams. The TAs noted that students attempted to influence them to use English in order to clarify problematic areas as they prepared for exams.

Students also used the issue of classroom language use to influence their TAs’ behavior in other ways. The TAs reported that they felt compelled to use English in order to manage their classrooms, in effect coercing some students to remain on task or to not disturb the class. These students were

often reluctant to devote much time or effort to their language learning and the TAs viewed the use of English with these students as the path of least resistance.

The TAs' ideas about effective teaching practices existed in conflict at times with the notions proposed by their methodology instructors. The TAs criticized these instructors' failure to model effective target language use during their pre-professional preparation, which handicapped the TAs' attempts to use more French. Their use of English may be seen in this context as one way of compensating for the difficulties they experienced in using more French in their instruction.

Finally, the TAs had to struggle to resolve conflicts resulting from their own teachers' use of the target language in classroom instruction and their own desire to teach using the target language. To a greater or lesser extent, in general their teaching represented a continuing attempt to overcome their teachers' practices. These attempts were made more difficult by their lack of exposure to models that incorporated the use of the target language in instruction.

The language teaching profession can benefit from additional research about the topic of teachers' target language use in the classroom. Data about teachers of other languages and at other levels, from elementary through advanced university study, will contribute to an overall understanding of the factors that influence classroom language use. Other considerations also affect the TAs' practices in the present study, considerations that have not been extensively examined in previous studies. The TAs reported that planning and the efficient use of classroom time were troublesome aspects of their work that made it difficult for them to use as much French as they would have liked, yet the review of literature for the present study revealed no previous examinations of this question. And finally, little research exists that might establish that either English or the target language is more effective for the teaching of specific material such as grammar or culture, despite claims and counterclaims in the professional literature. Studies are needed that might validate or refute claims regarding the value of the use of the two languages in classroom instruction.

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## Appendix 1

### Questionnaire

The following questionnaire has been designed for the following purposes:

1. To investigate beliefs of elementary French instructors about the use of French and English in their classroom instruction.
2. To investigate how elementary French instructors report using French and English in their own classrooms.

**Please respond to each of the following statements about your beliefs and practices regarding your classroom language use. On the scale provided after each item, circle the numerical value which best illustrates how you feel about the statement in question. Your responses will be held in the strictest confidence.**

[Note: Anchor points for respondents were constructed individually for each question. These are given for the first three items but are not included for all items in the interests of space. The complete questionnaire is available from the author.]

1. I have difficulty expressing myself in French in my classroom.

1.....2.....3.....4.....5  
 Great difficulty No difficulty

2. I try to avoid the use of English whenever possible in my classes.

1.....2.....3.....4.....5  
 Never try to avoid English Always try to avoid English

3. I use English in my classes when I consider it appropriate.

1.....2.....3.....4.....5  
 Regularly use English Never use English

4. I am afraid of making mistakes when I speak in French.
5. In my formal language learning, my teachers avoided using my native language in their instruction.
6. My own language teachers have served as positive role models for my teaching.
7. My course supervisor encourages me to use French exclusively in my teaching.

8. I know French grammatical terminology well enough to teach grammar without using English.
9. I believe French teachers should avoid the use of English in their classrooms whenever possible.
10. Instructors should present new vocabulary exclusively in French.
11. In my professional development, avoiding the use of English in classroom instruction has been encouraged.
12. I converse informally with my students in class in French.
13. In my classes I present material about French and Francophone cultures in English.
14. I am satisfied with the quality of my accent in French.
15. My students expect me to use English in my instruction.
16. I introduce new grammatical concepts in my classes first in French.
17. New French vocabulary should be presented using English translations.
18. Instructors should respond in French to student questions about course material.
19. I believe instruction in English has a definite place in the French classroom.
20. In my professional development, the teaching of language for communication was emphasized over the teaching of grammar.
21. My own language teachers never used my native language in their instruction.
22. My students seem to have little difficulty understanding my French.
23. My students receive instructions for activities which focus on grammar in English.
24. It is better for instructors to present difficult French grammatical concepts first in English.
25. Students can understand difficult grammar presented in French without undue difficulty.
26. I often lack confidence in my ability to teach in French when necessary.
27. I believe my native language has a pronounced influence on my French pronunciation (for non-native speakers only).



28. My course supervisor encourages me to use whatever language in which I am best able to communicate in my classroom.
29. It is difficult for beginning students to understand grammar presented in French.
30. I strive to emulate the practice of my own language teachers in my classroom instruction.
31. My students frequently ask me to speak in English in class.
32. In my professional development, the teaching of grammar was emphasized over the teaching of language for communication.
33. My own language teachers frequently used my native language in their classrooms.
34. Instructor announcements about administrative matters (office hours, test dates, syllabus changes) are best handled in French.
35. Instruction in English does not have a place in French classroom.
36. I present new vocabulary to the students in French.
37. I converse informally with my students in English in class.
38. I present material about French and Francophone cultures to the students in French.
39. I give instructions in French for grammatical activities.
40. My French is sufficiently fluent that I can conduct my class without resorting to English.
41. Instructors should answer student questions about administrative issues in English.
42. Material about French and Francophone cultures should be presented in French.
43. Instructors should present new grammar in French.
44. In my professional development, I have been encouraged to use both French and English in my teaching.
45. My students often indicate that they do not understand me when I speak French in my class.
46. Instructors should respond in French to student questions about administrative matters.
47. I am unsure of my ability to communicate in French.

48. I use English translation in presenting new French vocabulary to my students.
49. Instructors should respond in English to student questions about course material.
50. It is appropriate for French teachers to use English in their classroom if the instructor considers it important.
51. I am not fluent enough in French to teach my classes without using English.
52. I respond in English to student questions about administrative issues.
53. My students prefer that I use French in my classroom instruction.
54. Material about French and Francophone cultures should be taught in English.
55. I make announcements about administrative matters in my classes using French.
56. My students seem to have little difficulty understanding my French.
57. My students are accepting of my use of French in the classroom.

**For each of the following statements, indicate whether you strongly agree with the statement (SA); agree with the statement (A); are undecided or have no opinion about the statement (U); disagree with the statement (D); or strongly disagree with the statement (SD).**

If the instructor uses French exclusively in class,

58. Students will have improved speaking ability in French.
59. Students will be more interested in learning French.
60. Students will be more likely to maintain their fluency in French than they otherwise would.
61. Students will be more motivated to learn French.
62. Students will acquire French with less effort.
63. Students will have better pronunciation in French.
64. Students will have more positive attitudes toward French.
65. Students will read more easily in French.
66. Students will make fewer errors in speaking French.
67. Students' writing in French will be more grammatically accurate.

68. Students will better appreciate French culture.
69. Students will have more desire to continue studying French.
70. Students will have broader vocabularies in French.
71. Students' reading comprehension in French will be improved.
72. Students will write more fluently in French.
73. Students will have an increased understanding of French grammar.
74. Students will speak French more fluently.
75. Students' spoken language will be more grammatical.
76. Students will express themselves more easily in French.
77. Students will make fewer errors in pronouncing French.
78. Students will have better oral comprehension in French.

## Appendix 2

### Interview guide for TAs

First I'll be talking to you as someone who knows about French, and then we'll talk about your background in French.

1. Can you tell me about your background in French? undergraduate / graduate / favorite / least favorite courses / informal language learning experiences / study of other languages
2. In your study of French, what areas did you concentrate on? What were your areas of specialization?
3. What do you feel are your strengths in French?
4. Are there any areas in which you feel weaker than others?
5. What aspects of your own language learning were easy for you? What areas were more difficult?
6. What made you decide to teach French?
7. Tell me what you see as the reasons for studying French in college. What are your goals for your students?
8. What do you think makes French difficult for students? What areas do you think they might have problems with? What aspects of French do you think are easier for French students? What could make the study of French easier for students?
9. Tell me about the class(es) you taught in the most recent semester / you are currently teaching. Have you taught these courses before? Tell me about the students in your classes. What do you think they get out of your classes?
10. Tell me about the kinds of assignments and activities you tend to use in your classes. Tell me about contexts in which you might use French or English in your own classroom.
11. Tell me about any experiences you may have had which have affected how you think about teaching French.
12. Tell me about the best and worst foreign language teachers you have had. What made them good or bad? Can you describe the methods your teachers used in your own formal language learning? What effects did these methods have on your language learning? On your thinking about language learning? On your teaching and thinking about teaching?
13. How might you change your teaching for a group of students you perceived as weaker than usual? As being stronger than usual?

## Appendix 3

### Guide for interview with Elementary French course coordinator

1. Could you please give your name, title, and describe your responsibilities for the Basic Language Program in French?
2. Could you please elaborate on the program's policy regarding the use of English and French by TAs in their classrooms? What about before class, and during office hours?
3. By what means would you know whether TAs follow this policy you have just elaborated?
4. How would you react, or how have you reacted, in a situation where a teaching assistant did not follow the policy you have just outlined?
5. In your experience what are some of the significant difficulties encountered by TAs who teach in your program?
6. What efforts are made in your program for the training and development of the TAs in your program, both initial and ongoing?
7. Can you describe the content of the methodology course for TAs that you teach? When do they take the course?
8. Can you make any generalizations about the undergraduate students in Elementary French, in terms of their motivation for and attitudes about language study?
9. Would you comment about the content of the courses in the Elementary French program? About the content of the exams?
10. Do you think that English is more appropriately used in some contexts than in others in the French classroom?

# GESTURE IN JAPANESE LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION: THE CASE OF ERROR CORRECTION

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## Introduction

Communication is a total process that involves both nonverbal and verbal language. During communicative interactions, human beings use not only their vocal tracts, but also other parts of their bodies to transmit meanings. The following scenario illustrates this point. A person points to an object with a finger or a thumb, and asks “Could you show me that?” The object referred to by the word “that” may not be specified without the help of the index finger or thumb unless the speaker and hearer have extensive shared background that enables them to communicate the intention. In this situation, the speaker successfully articulates what s/he means by combining the use of gesture (nonverbal language) with the use of words (verbal language). In other words, the listener would not understand what “that” refers to without the gesture.

Gesture is a nonverbal means of communication and is frequently used along with speech in face-to-face communicative acts. Consciously or unconsciously, human beings rely on gesture so much that several researchers have realized that it is an important area of study. In *Hand and Mind*, for example, McNeill (1992) suggests that both gesture and speech are generated from the same area of the brain. He explains that gesture is one method of translating an idea unit, while speech is another. Kendon (1986) similarly notes the significance of gesture, stating that “Gesticulation is often an important component of the utterance unit produced, in the sense

that the utterance unit cannot be fully comprehended unless its gestural component is taken into consideration (p. 12).” Wylie (1985) also emphasizes the indispensability of gesture, stating that the separation of gesture from speech violates the unity of the body’s movement.

The significance of gesture in communicative acts is especially great when teaching foreign language. In the foreign language classroom, the language student’s proficiency in the second language (L2) is limited. Students frequently cannot manipulate L2 skills sufficiently to comprehend utterances aurally. Thus, they are likely to depend on the teacher’s gestures to understand the complete meaning of the teacher’s L2 utterances.

In the beginning L2 classroom, second language teachers cannot easily transmit messages in L2 because of the students’ limited second language proficiency. Thus, language teachers must rely on other communicative means, e.g., gesture. Most foreign language teachers, in fact, use gesture in language instruction whether consciously or not. Therefore, it would seem that the significance of gesture in the foreign language classroom should be investigated. However, gesture has received little attention in the field of language pedagogy. The present study is an exploratory work on the use of both gesture and verbal utterances by the teacher in the L2 classroom.

There are many unexplored domains of the use of gesture in language instruction, including word searches and communication breakdowns. The present study focuses on the use of gesture, defined as hand shapes, and hand and arm movements, in one type of instruction, error correction. Error correction, according to Ellis (1994), refers to “attempts to deal specifically with linguistic errors” (p. 584). The present research adapts Ellis’s definition of the term “correction” and is limited to studying the use of gesture in error correction.

Self-correction of error is the ideal goal in language learning (Allwright and Bailey 1991). No one but the student her/himself is able to make changes in her/his developing interlanguage system. By completing an error correction sequence by her/himself, the student acknowledges which error s/he has made and what the correct utterance is. To capitalize on this aspect of language learning, language teachers strive to arrange oral language practice so that the student produces the linguistically correct speech and self-corrects errors. They try to avoid providing the student with the correct utterances. Because language teachers who adopt the communicative approach usually seek to limit their use of the students’ first language as much as possible in order to increase the amount of L2 input,

such teachers frequently use L2 to inform the student that s/he has just made an error. However, it is a difficult task for teachers to lead the student to the goal of self-correction while speaking in the target language. Language teachers cannot help but depend on the inherent power of gesture in these situations to make their meaning clear.

The present research examines how language teachers' use of gesture in conjunction with speech contributes to students' successful self-correction of errors. The purpose of this study is to document the importance of gesture in the university Japanese second language classroom. The research questions addressed by the present study are as follows:

- (1) Which gestures appear in error correction in the Japanese second language classroom?
- (2) How do language teachers provide students with opportunities for self-correction in an error correction situation in the Japanese language classroom?
- (3) Are there typical sequential patterns to the teachers' use of gestures? How do language teachers use gestures with speech to enhance communication with the students in error correction situations in the Japanese language classroom?

## **Background**

This section reviews the relevant studies on error correction and gesture as they relate to second language instruction. The following review consists of three sections: a review of error correction studies, a brief review of gesture studies, and a discussion of how the foundations laid by these studies will be used for the present study.

## **Error Correction**

There is a noteworthy body of literature on error correction. Much of the literature deals with what to correct, when to correct, who should correct, and how to correct. However, there has been little research examining the use of nonverbal and verbal cues when providing error correction. The following sections discuss the literature associated with what, when, who, and how gesture is used for error correction.



**1. What errors to correct.** Hendrickson (1978) and Chaudron (1987) both review what to correct when providing error correction. Hendrickson's study provides an historical review of errors as well as a review of the literature on error correction. He also gives suggestions for what to correct, stating that "correcting three types of errors can be quite useful to second language students: errors that impair communication significantly; errors that have highly stigmatizing effects on the listener or reader; and errors that occur frequently in students' speech and writing" (1978, p. 392).

Chaudron's (1987) work discusses which specific errors should be corrected, concluding that teachers pay less attention to treating grammatical errors than other errors. Nevertheless, despite the teachers' tendency to not correct grammatical errors, Chaudron's review of six different research studies shows that grammatical errors occur most frequently in student production when compared with phonological, lexical, content, and discourse errors. Thus, integrating Chaudron's observations with Hendrickson's (1978) suggestion that the most frequently occurring errors should be corrected, it seems clear that grammatical errors should be corrected in language instruction.

**2. When to correct errors.** Long's (1977) study discusses when it is appropriate to correct an error and considers the importance of the role of feedback. He reviews descriptive studies of teachers' behaviors in the classroom in response to students' errors to see what the teachers do to provide feedback. Based on audio recordings of verbal interactions in the classroom, he suggests that error correction is an essential characteristic of successful classroom instruction in second language teaching. The timing of error corrections was considered as well. However, it was studied exclusively on a single time line. That is, the correction was either immediate, often interrupting the student's utterance; delayed, appearing after the student completed her/his utterance; or postponed, occurring at some future time. However, the role of gesture and the possibility that verbal and gestural correction may occur simultaneously was not considered.

**3. Who should correct errors.** Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks (1977) elucidate the organization of conversational repair. Their term "repair" addresses a wider range of situations than the term "correction" used in the present study. The phenomena they address are not contingent upon errors

and are not limited to the replacement of an incorrect utterance with a correct one. Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks use descriptions of conversational interactions to show how self-corrections are preferable to other correction practices. The study concludes that “self-correction and other-corrections are not alternatives. Rather, the organization of repair in conversation provides centrally for self-correction, which can be arrived at by the alternative routes of self-initiation and other-initiation” (Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks 1977, p. 377).

Van Lier (1988) applies the organization of repair discussed by Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks (1977) to the foreign language classroom situation. He examines how an initiator and a repairer develop a sequential pattern of error correction in discourse. Van Lier’s analysis of the data describes the following patterns of sequential repair adopted from Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks study: same-turn self-repair, transition-space self-repair, third-turn self-repair, other-initiation/self repair, other-repair, and self-initiation/other-repair. Van Lier found that other-repair occurs frequently in the classroom, but suggests that teachers should delay other-repair to promote the development of self-monitoring, which is essential to oral competence in the target language.

**4. How to correct errors.** Johnson (1995) demonstrated a sequential communication pattern in the second language classroom:

an initiation act  
     → a response act  
         → an evaluation act.

In addition to demonstrating this sequential pattern, Johnson used close observation of classroom communication to shed light on teacher-student interactions. She suggests that research on communication patterns needs to take context into consideration. She states that “the meanings communicated between the speakers in each excerpt are determined, in large part, by the context within which they occurred” (1995, p. 4).

Johnson compares two excerpts to describe these interactions. In the first excerpt, the structure of the teacher’s evaluations differs depending on whether the students’ responses are correct or incorrect. If a student’s response is incorrect, the teacher ignores the incorrect response, then gives another initiation. The teacher maintains control over all initiations and evaluations of students’ response. For example:

**T:** What is this advertisement about?

**Ss:** Radio . . . sale.

Cheap sale . . .

**T:** What is the word that is used there? (Johnson 1995, p. 94)

In the second excerpt, Johnson describes a variation of this pattern. The social participation structure in this excerpt encourages students to initiate questions, to control the topic of discussion, and to self-select when to participate. The teacher mutually constructed meaning with the students by giving them opportunities to control the communication. For example:

**T:** So, what other questions do you have about this (the article), or Gay Pride Week in general?

**Ss:** What is this pin?

Oh, I saw that too . . .

I saw this on some people, but I didn't know.

I thought it some politics or something . . .

**T:** OK. It says, "Straight, Secure, Supportive."

Do you know what that means? (Johnson 1995, pp. 101–2)

Johnson's comparison reveals that both excerpts demonstrate the basic pattern shown above; however, the second excerpt creates opportunities for students to use the L2 in the classroom learning context and encourages L2 acquisition.

**5. Use of verbal and nonverbal cues in error correction.** Fanselow (1977) has conducted one of the few studies that describes both verbal and nonverbal behaviors in error correction. His study examines which types of oral errors are treated and how they are treated. The analysis of the teachers' videotaped behaviors demonstrates that teachers are less concerned with grammatical errors than with incorrect meaning. The study also concludes that more frequently used error correction treatment resulted in giving students the correct answer before their self-correction. Fanselow's study provides only a limited description of nonverbal behavior. He gives a few examples, but these examples do not include the contexts in which the gestures appear nor do they indicate the relationship between the gesture and the verbal utterance.

## Gesture

Kendon (1994) describes the dichotomy of perspectives on the use of gesture in communication: gesture has a smaller contribution to communication than the verbal utterance, but gesture plays a significant role in face-to-face communication.

Krauss, Morrel-Samuels, and Colasante (1991) were skeptical of the view that gestures are produced for communication. They conducted experiments to study the information that gestures convey to receivers using experimental methods. The results of the experiments showed that gestures are not richly informative and that they enhance communication only to a limited extent.

In contrast to Krauss, Morrel-Samuels, and Colasante's findings, there are studies whose conclusion is that gestures play a significant role in communication. Goodwin and Goodwin (1986) gathered data on many aspects of nonverbal communication, including gestures, by observation within natural contexts. They showed how gestures generate their meaning by placement within a verbal context. Goodwin and Goodwin studied how conversational participants interpreted each other's actions in order to determine their next responsive action. They determined that the participants created the communication context through their co-participation.

The importance of gesture in communication is also suggested by Wylie (1985). He insists that communication is an integrative process, and that human beings communicate via all means of communication, not just speech. From this standpoint, gesture is, no doubt, included in the collective elements of communication. Wylie applies the totality of communication to foreign language teaching and learning and is one of the few scholars who proposes the significance of both speech and gesture in the foreign language classroom.

## Implications for the Present Study

Little study on the use of gesture in foreign language instruction has been done. In particular, studies on the teaching of non-Western languages, such as Japanese, have rarely focused on gesture. The present study focuses on the use of both gesture and verbal utterances when correcting students' errors in oral communication. The present study will observe error correction types, sequential patterns, and functions of error corrections in the context of communication between teachers and students. Observations

will include the context of the communication, gestures, and verbal utterances. Johnson's (1995) work implies that there is a verbal sequential pattern of interaction between the teachers and students in the language classroom. The present study will examine whether or not there is a sequential communication pattern to error correction when gestures are also taken into consideration.

The goal of the present study is to lay the foundation for the study of gesture use in Japanese language instruction. More specifically, the present study targets the role of gestures in error correction in the classroom. By focusing on one particular circumstance in which gestures appear, this study will attempt to account for gesture use in that circumstance and to examine how gestures play an important role in communication in the foreign language classroom. Suggestions will be made for the training of foreign language teachers with regard to the applied use of gesture.

## Method

The subjects in this study are three native speakers of Japanese who teach Japanese at an American university. They are all females in their thirties and forties. Seven classes, with a total of 350 minutes of instruction time, were videotaped. All classes recorded were at the first-year level. Each class contained thirteen to eighteen students. One of the teachers provided lecture-oriented instruction, while the other two gave nonlecture instruction. Nonlecture instruction requires both teachers and students to produce more target language than lecture-oriented instruction. All three of the teachers were trained to teach using the communicative approach. Teachers attempt to encourage students to negotiate meaning between two or more persons as much as possible in order to promote language practice.

From the raw data, segments of grammatical error correction were identified and those segments with gestures were transcribed orally and visually for the present research. A total of sixteen segments with gestures (approximately twenty minutes of data) were targeted for final analysis. Data analysis was performed in the following order. First, the location of the following points in the text were determined: (1) the student's error, (2) the initiative to correct the error, (3) the attempt at correcting the error, and (4) the confirmation of the error correction. Second, it was determined who took the initiative to correct the error and who completed the error correction. Third, detailed descriptions of these instances were made

with consideration of the sequence of events during the error correction, function(s) of the gesture(s), and the timing between the gesture and the verbal utterance. Fourth, the analysis examined how and if these language teachers delayed their immediate error correction.

The data are presented in tabular form (see pp. 164–65) and are described in the text. Textual descriptions consist of excerpts taken from large segments of data. The table consists of seven columns. Column one numerically identifies the utterance number within the segment analyzed. Column two identifies who made the utterance. Column three lists the transcribed utterances. Underlines indicate that the utterance was accompanied by gesture. Column four indicates the number of gestures associated with the utterance. Each notation consists of three numbers (X-X-X). The first number shows the segment in which the gesture appeared. The second number identifies the number of the gestural type in each segment. Gestures that have the same second number in the same segment are identical gestures. The third number shows the order of appearance of identical gestures. Column five identifies which action was undertaken in that utterance: error, initiative, correction, or confirmation. Column six shows which functions the gesture carries out. The last column displays drawings of the hand and its movement in making the gesture.

Each verbal unit of the transcript consists of three lines: phonetic transcription, word-by-word translation, and sentence translation. The following abbreviations are used in the transcript:

**SM:** subject marker

**OM:** object marker

**PM:** place marker

**QM:** question marker

**TM:** topic marker

The data are then analyzed in two sections: (1) types of gestures, and (2) sequential patterns and function(s) of gestures. There were seven different types of gesture found in the sixteen segments analyzed. Five of these seven, which appeared frequently during error correction, are discussed here. The other two gestures rarely appeared. One segment, which represents the sequential pattern found in most of the collected data segments, was chosen for sequential analysis because it explicitly demonstrates the sequential pattern of error correction.<sup>2</sup>

## Data Analysis

This section presents a selected data segment that sheds light on the significance of gesture usage in communication between teachers and student(s) in this study. The segment introduced here is chosen for three reasons. First, it shows how interaction for the purpose of error correction is constructed by the participants using both gesture and verbal utterances. Second, it explicitly demonstrates, as the oral corrections in Johnson's (1995) study displayed, very similar sequential patterns for both gestural and verbal utterances in error correction procedures. Third, it introduces a technique by which language teachers delay immediate correction after a student makes an error. This delay encourages the student to attempt self-correction. Close analysis of the data segment highlights the integrative nature of gesture and speech in the construction of communication.

## Type of Gestures Used

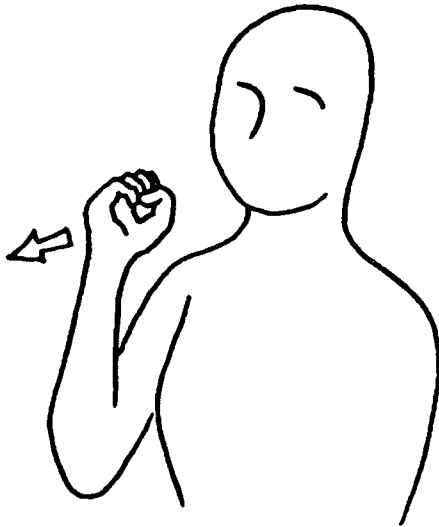
In this section, each type of hand gesture used by the teachers for error correction is categorized and defined. Within each category, gestures are presented with their drawings. Each drawing includes transcripts of any verbal utterances with their English translations (sentence translations). An integrated analysis of the gestures follows the data presentation.

The data from this study suggest that the gestures used during error correction can be divided into two categories: specific language error gestures and general foreign language classroom gestures. The first type, specific language error gestures, is defined as a gesture that has a close relationship with a particular language error. The gesture identifies the error or indicates the correct form. The second type is a general gesture found in the language classroom. These gestures may occur in situations other than error correction. They do not identify what language error the student has made or its correction, but they do promote communication between the teacher and student(s).

## Specific Language Error Gestures

Gestures used in this study to correct specific language errors can be categorized into two groups; those that represent particles and those that stand for tense.

**1. Gestures indicating particle errors.** Because particle errors are quite frequent among elementary students of Japanese and because they play a crucial role in transmitting meaning to the listener, Japanese teachers tend to devote a great deal of energy to correcting them. Figure 1 illustrates a right-hand shape; the teacher makes a circle by rounding the fingers and putting the tips of the thumb and the fingers together. The teacher then moves the hand horizontally away from her body.



**Figure 1.**  
Particle (Right Hand)

The following lists the segments in which this gesture occurs:

1. segment 4, lines 5–7:

*T:* juuichijihan (pause) nemas  
'sleep (at) eleven-thirty'

2. segment 4, lines 14–15:

*T:* juuichijihan ni hajimarimas  
'begins at eleven-thirty'

3. segment 6, lines 4–5:

*T:* Koohii (pause)  
'coffee'

4. segment 8, lines 4–8:

*S:* shiidaa rapizzu no konpyuutaa sofutoweaa kanpanii kara  
'from a computer software company in Cedar Rapids'

*T:* (Pause)



S: aah  
 'well'

S: ni  
 'at'

5. segment 8, line 10:

S: wo  
 '(OM)'

6. segment 8, line 16:

T: just de  
 'just for'

7. segment 8, lines 26–28:

S: Shiidaa rapizzu no konpyuutaa sofutoweaa kompanii de  
 shigoto wo shimashi-ta.  
 '(I) work for a computer software company in Cedar  
 Rapids.'

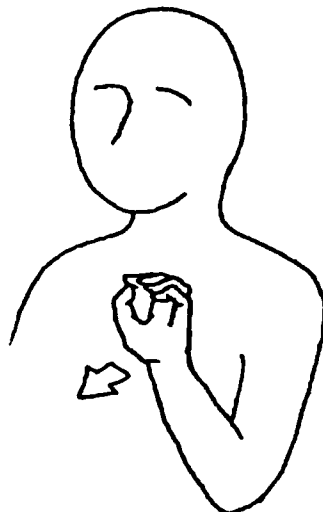
8. segment 21, line 2:

T: Aiowa Shitii wa  
 'Iowa City (TM)'

9. segment 21, lines 3–4:

S: Aiowa Shitii wa doo des ka.  
 'How is Iowa City?'

The gesture in Figure 2 is a left-hand version of Figure 1. The teacher makes the same hand shape and as Figure 1 but with her left hand.



**Figure 2.**  
 Particle (Left Hand)

The following lists the segments in which this gesture occurs:

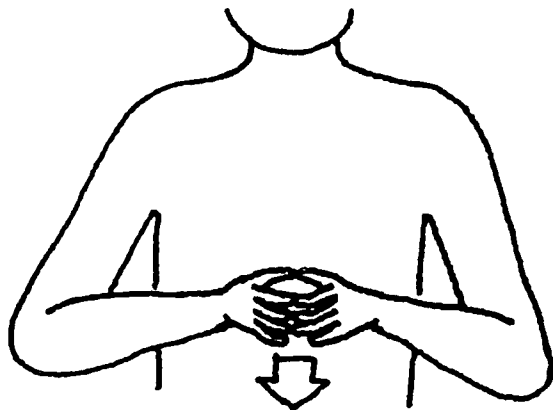
1. segment 5, line 6:

**T:** apaato particle  
 'apartment particle'

2. segment 5, line 18:

**S:** Watashi wa apaato (pause) benkyoo  
 'I study (at) the apartment.'

The gesture in Figure 3 requires both hands; the teacher makes a circle by putting her two thumbs together and the two index fingers together. The teacher then moves her hands downward.



**Figure 3.**  
 Particle (Both Hands)

The following lists the segments in which this gesture occurs:

1. segment 24, lines 12–13:

**T:** (pause) ga  
 '(SM)'

2. segment 26, lines 4–5:

**S:** basukettobooru ga  
 'basketball (SM)'

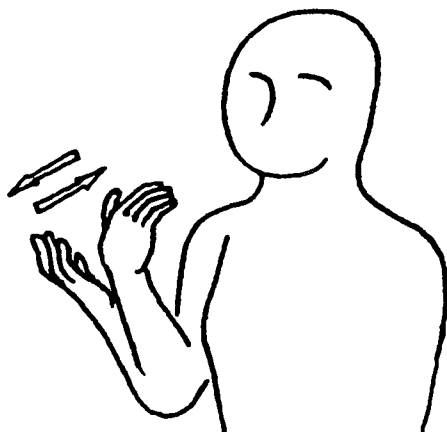
3. segment 30, lines 8–9:

**S:** yomu (pause)  
 'to read'

4. segment 30, line 11:  
 S: yomu ga  
 'to read (SM)'
5. segment 30, line 12:  
 S: Yomu no ga suki des.  
 '(I) like reading.'

All three of these gestures share the same shape, a circle. This appears to represent a particle. As demonstrated by the drawings and transcripts, the circle gesture occurs when the teacher prompts the student to substitute a particle in a verbal utterance, when the student orally produces the correct particle, and when the teacher indicates the necessity of including a particle. However, there are variations in the production of the gesture. Figure 1 is made with the right hand, Figure 2 is produced with the left hand, and Figure 3 is formed with both hands. Two of the teachers used the gesture in Figure 1 and one of these used the gesture in Figure 2 as well. The third teacher used the gesture in Figure 3. As McNeill (1992) states, different gestures may be used by different individuals when describing the same event. The present data also demonstrate that the teachers showed some variation in their production of the circle gesture used to indicate a single letter error in the particle.

2. **Gestures indicating tense errors.** Tense errors also receive much attention from teachers at this level of Japanese. Figure 4 illustrates a hand shape used to correct a tense error. The teacher extends her fingers and holds her hand up in front of her shoulder with her palm facing her body. She then moves her hand backward and forward. This gesture does not



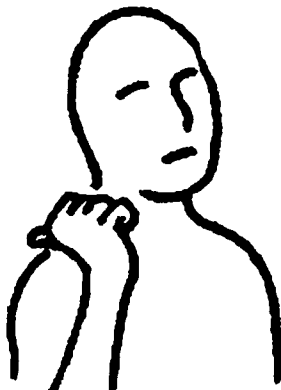
**Figure 4.**  
 Past Tense (High)

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show much variation between teachers except for the height of the hand. Some gestures of this shape are situated higher above the shoulder than others. The following lists the segments in which this gesture occurs:

1. segment 7, line 2:  
T: Mimashi-ta mimashi-taa  
'(I) **watched, watched**'
2. segment 7, line 4:  
T: ka  
'(QM)'
3. segment 10, lines 5–6:  
T: kaima (pause)  
S: shita  
'(I) **bought**'
4. segment 10, line 10:  
S: Soo des ka.  
'**It is so.**'
5. segment 10, line 11:  
S: Koban wo tsukurimashi-ta.  
'(You) **cooked meal.**'

The gesture in Figure 4 has a characteristic in common with the gestures introduced in *The Semiotics of French Gestures* (Calbris 1990). As Calbris' examples show (Figures 5 and 6), the hand turned over the shoulder places the past directly behind the speaker. This localization of time with respect to the present moment is a concept found in European cultures.



**Figure 5.**  
Recent Past

Drawing based on the illustration by Zaü for Calbris and Montredon (1986, p. 140).



**Figure 6.**  
Distant Past

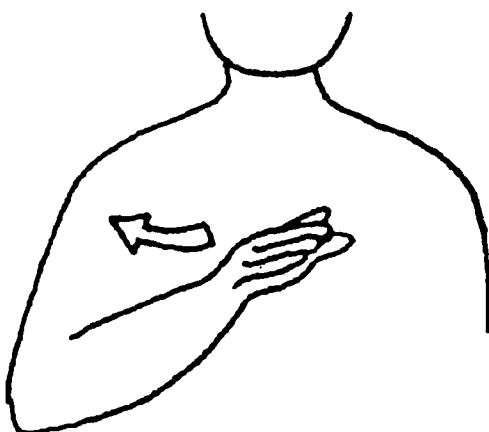
Drawing based on the illustration by Zaü for Calbris and Montredon (1986, p. 140).

The Japanese language shows the same gestural perception of past and future as that found in European cultures. The moment just past is backward and the moment in the future is forward (Koizumi 1993). Japanese language teachers use this gesture because they have the same perception of time as U.S. university students.

### General Gestures Used to Communicate an Error

The gestures described in this section were used by the teachers to indicate an error in general. The gesture in Figure 7 illustrates a hand shape with a tensely opened palm, facing down and placed toward the left side of the body at mid-chest height. This hand shape was used to promote a student's oral production. The teacher moves her hand from the left to the right across her body in a smooth motion.

The following lists the segments in which this gesture occurs:



**Figure 7.**  
From the Beginning

## 1. segment 8, line 22:

T: from the beginning  
 ‘from the beginning’

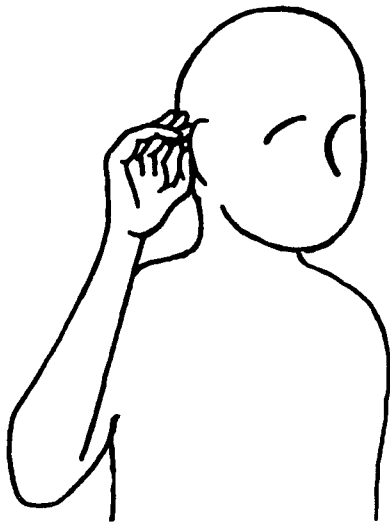
## 2. segment 10, lines 2–3:

T: wo (pause)  
 ‘(OM)’

In segment 8, line 22, the gesture instructs the student to say the sentence from the beginning. The same gesture in segment 10, lines 2–3, also instructs the student to complete the sentence beginning after “wo (OM)” by producing an appropriate verb. Both gestures in these cases provide the student with encouragement to produce the verbal utterance.

The teachers made the following gesture (Figure 8) by setting their hand behind their ear as if they could not hear what the student had said. By performing this gesture, the teacher provides the student with an opportunity to carry out another attempt, whether or not the student recognizes her/his error.

The following lists the segments in which this gesture occurs:



**Figure 8.**  
Hearing

## 1. segment 14, lines 3–4:

T: kirei (pause)  
 S: kirei-da

## 2. segment 16, lines 2–4:

T: Uun, moo ichido.  
 ‘Well, once more.’

S: Kara kimashi-ta ka.  
'(Where) did you come from?'

The gesture in Figure 8 appears to work as a repair initiator. A speaker (the teacher in the cases above) forms the gesture with or without a verbal utterance. By showing the gesture to a student, the speaker prompts the next speaker's (the student in the cases above) oral correction. The example above may imply a pattern similar to the example introduced in Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks's (1977) study. The gesture above appears to be the counterpart of "Hu:h?" in their study. Both the gesture above and "Hu:h?" prompt the next speaker's correction (self-correction from other-initiation).

D: Wul did'e ever get married 'r anything?

C: → Hu:h?

D: Did jee ever get married?

C: I have // no idea.

The gesture in Figure 9 also provides the student with an opportunity to produce a verbal utterance. Figure 9 illustrates an open hand shape with the teacher's palm facing her body. She then moves her hand toward her body.

The following lists the segments in which this gesture occurs:



**Figure 9.**  
Come Here

1. segment 8, line 18:  
T: Moo ichido.  
**'Once more.'**
2. segment 8, line 20:  
T: hajime kara  
**'from the beginning'**
3. segment 16, line 5:  
T: doo  
**(the first sound of the word 'where')**
4. segment 16, line 6:  
T: doo  
**(the first sound of the word 'where')**
5. segment 16, line 7:  
T: dochira kara  
**'where from'**
6. segment 16, line 8:  
Ss: kimashi-ta ka/irasshaimashi-ta ka  
**'(Where) did you come (from)?'**
7. segment 16, line 9:  
T: Dochira kara irasshaimashi-ta ka.  
**'Where did you come from?'**
8. segment 18, line 1:  
T: Saienfiru wa doo deshi-ta ka.  
**'How was Seinfeld?'**
9. segment 20, line 3:  
T: ne, hai  
**'(EM), yes'**

The hand shape and movement shown in Figure 9 is often used to indicate “come here” in English language cultures. In Japanese culture, on the other hand, the gesture for “come here” uses the same hand shape as that in Figure 9, but the thumb and fingers are held down. The Japanese “come here” gesture often applies to the “good-bye” situation in the English language culture (Brosnahan 1991). McNeill (1992) also supports the cultural specificity of different gestures.



The gesture in Figure 9 implies the meaning “come here” and is a deictic gesture because it points toward a specific direction. However, the gesture in Figure 9 may also function as a metaphoric gesture, carrying the meaning “speak up” to the student in the context where it appears. It presents an image of a concept as if a student’s verbal utterance is transmitted to the teacher. In this sense, the gesture in Figure 9 can be considered as a metaphoric, culturally specific gesture. In fact, another gesture implies the meaning of “speak” in Japanese; one puts the tips of the thumb and the fingers together with the palm facing forward, and then opens and closes one’s palm repeatedly (Brosnahan 1991).

The use of the gesture in Figure 9 can be interpreted in either of two ways. The teacher may be concerned about the instructional function of the gesture rather than the preservation of cultural authenticity and so pays more attention to encouraging the student’s verbal utterance than to the demonstration of culturally authentic materials. On the other hand, she may be exhibiting acculturation to American culture. Having been in the United States for two years, she may have acquired this gesture.

## **Sequential Patterns and Functions of Gestures**

The purpose of this section is to analyze the gestures used in their sequential contexts. The analysis will illustrate how Japanese language teachers’ use of gestures combines with their verbal utterances when correcting errors in order to contribute to communication between teachers and students. Analysis of the data shows a definite sequential pattern to the interactions:

Student’s error

- teacher’s initiative with gesture
- student’s attempt at correction
- teacher’s confirmation with gesture.

This pattern has the same sequence of classroom verbal interaction as that shown by Johnson (1995):

An initiation act

- a response act
- an evaluation act.

As the pattern in the present study shows, the teachers may not initially provide a correct answer orally. Instead, they send gestural cues to encourage the students to produce the correct answer on their own. The students may not always complete the correction, but they do have an opportunity to self-correct.

Another finding from this analysis is that gestures and verbal utterances used for error correction can perform multiple functions simultaneously. The present article integrates the findings from Long's (1977) and Allwright's (1988) studies and proposes four error correction functions:

- to inform the student of the fact of an error (F1),
- to inform the student of the location of the error (F2),
- to inform the student of the type of error committed (F3), and
- to confirm correction of the error (F4). (See Column 6 in Segment 8 for examples).

These functions can take various forms: (1) integration of the teacher's gesture with the student's verbal utterance, (2) integration of the teacher's gesture with the teacher's verbal utterance, (3) production of the gesture by the teacher alone, or (4) production of a verbal utterance by the teacher alone.

The remainder of this section consists of descriptions of the data segment in Table 1 on pages 164–165 and a summary of findings from these descriptions. The descriptions highlight how the teachers in this study delay giving correct answers orally in order to provide students with an opportunity to self-correct. The teachers manipulate the interplay of their gestures and verbal utterances for this purpose. The interweaving of these two devices constructs the framework for communication and creates the context for error correction in the foreign language classroom.

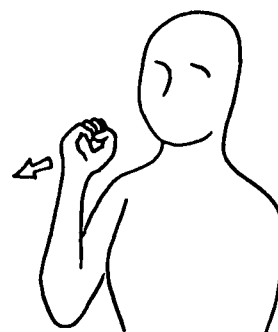
### **Description: Segment 8**

Segment 8 (see Table 1) begins with one student asking another about what she had done the day before.

When S1 asks S2 where she worked on the previous day, S2 responds by saying that she worked for a computer software company in Cedar Rapids (line 5). The correct utterance would have been, "Shiidaa rapizzu no konpyuutaa sofutoweaa kanpanii de [for a computer software company in

Table 1.  
Segment 8  
7:25



1 <sup>1</sup>	S1 <sup>2</sup> : Doko ni <sup>3</sup> where at 'Where'				
2	T: Un yes 'Yes'				
3	S1: shigoto wo shimashi-ta ka work (OM) do-PAST (QM) 'did you work?'				
4	S2: Shiidaa rapizzu no konpyuutaa Cedar Rapids of computer				Error <sup>5</sup>
5	sofutoweeaa kanpanii kara software company from 'from a computer software company in Cedar Rapids'				
6	T: (pause)	8-1-14 8-1-24	Initiative	F1/F2/F3 <sup>6</sup> F3	
7	S2: <u>aah</u>	8-1-3		F3	
8	ni at 'at'				
9	<u>aah</u>	8-1-4		F1/F3	
10	<u>wo</u> (OM)	8-1-5		F1/F3	
11	aah				
12	<u>de</u> for	8-1-6 8-1-7 8-1-8	Correction	F3 F3 F3	
13	kara de shimashi from for do-PAST 'I did from for'				Error
14	T: <u>kara kara de ja</u> from from for not (incomplete utterance) 'It is not from from for'	8-2-1		F1	
15	S2: kara de shima from for do-NO TENSE (incomplete utterance) 'I do/did from for'				



**Gesture 17**  
Lines 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, 16,  
17, 18



**Gesture 2**  
Line 14

16	T: just <u>de</u> for	8-1-9	Correction	F1/F3	
17	just <u>de</u> for	8-1-10		F3	
18	<u>de</u> for	8-1-11		F3	
19	S2: de for				
20	T: <u>Moo</u> ichido. already once 'Once more.'	8-3-1		none	 <p><b>Gesture 3</b> Lines 20, 22</p>
21	S2: de for				
22	T: <u>Hajime</u> kara beginning from 'From the beginning'	8-3-2		none	 <p><b>Gesture 4</b> Line 24</p>
23	Hajime kara beginning from 'From the beginning'				
24	<u>From the beginning</u>	8-4-1		none	
25	Hai Yes 'Yes'				
26	S2: Shiidaa rapizzu no konpyuutaa Cedar Rapids of computer				
27	sofutoweaa kanpanii <u>de</u> software company for	8-1-12	Confirmation	F2/F3/F4	
28	shigoto wo shimashi-ta. work (OM) do-PAST 'I worked for a computer software company in Cedar Rapids.'				

1 = utterance number; 2 = speaker; 3 = Japanese spoken, word-by-word translation, sentence translation; 4 = segment number, gesture number, number of occurrence of the gesture; 5 = action taken; 6 = function carried out; 7= gesture used with motion indicated

Cedar Rapids].” However, instead of saying “de [for]” at the end of the utterance, S2 incorrectly says “kara [from].” The teacher responds to S2’s incorrect utterance “kara [from]” in line 5, by producing the particle gesture (8-1-1) in line 6 without verbalizing. She moves the gesture away from her body twice. At that same moment she expresses wonder with a facial expression to indicate that something is wrong with S2’s speech. The student (S2) responds to the teacher’s message, saying “aah.” While S2 is thinking of another answer, the teacher once more sends the particle gesture (8-1-3) in line 7.

In line 8, S2 attempts another answer, “ni [at].” Her production of the particle indicates that she was aware of the kind of error she had made. The teacher, in response to this incorrect utterance, repeats the particle gesture (8-1-4). S2 sees that her attempt was incorrect and tries another answer “wo [an object marker]” in line 10. This answer does not satisfy the teacher, either. The teacher repeats the particle gesture with no verbal utterances three more times (8-1-6/8-1-7/8-1-8). In line 12, S2 utters the correct particle, “de [for].” The teacher stops the gesture; instead she nods and smiles. The teacher produced the particle gesture eight times to encourage the student to keep trying, but never verbally provided the correct answer.

S2 attempts in line 13 to complete the sentence she has begun by saying the second half of the sentence, “kara de shimashi [do-PAST from for].” S2 makes another error in this utterance. “De [for]” is supposed to replace the particle “kara [from].” The teacher immediately interrupts S2 using both speech and gesture in line 14. The teacher says, “kara kara de ja [it is not from, from for].” Her gesture is similar to a hand waving, which commonly indicates “no” in Japan. This time, S2 does not appear to understand the teacher’s meaning. She repeats the same error, “kara de shima [I do/did from for],” in line 15.

In line 16, the teacher tells the student to verbalize only “de [for]” instead of “kara [from]” and “de [for]” together. She repeats “just de [for]” to finish providing the correct answer. The teacher uses the particle gesture three times (8-1-9/8-1-10/8-1-11) while saying “just de [for].” S2 follows the teacher by producing exactly the same sound, “de [for].”

In line 20, the teacher attempts to make sure that S2 is capable of making a correct verbal utterance by herself. The teacher prepares in line 20 to let S2 review the sentence by verbally directing her with “moo ichido [once more]” and with the gesture (8-3-1). S2 utters only “de [for]” (line 21). The teacher responds by verbally and gesturally directing S2 to repeat

the sentence from the beginning. She repeats this direction verbally in line 23. In line 24, the teacher repeats the direction in English and accompanies it with the gesture (8-4-1). The teacher places her open right hand palm down on the left side of her front, and then moves her hand to the right.

Finally, S2 attempts to verbalize the whole sentence “Shiidaa rapizzu no konpyuutaa sofutoweaa kanpanii de shigoto wo shimashi-ta” [I worked for a computer software company in Cedar Rapids.] In the middle of this utterance, in line 27, the teacher once more produces the particle gesture. The gesture appears at the same moment as S2’s verbal utterance of the particle “de [for].” The gesture confirms that S2 has corrected the particle.

### Findings: Segment 8

As the description above demonstrates, this segment includes the sequential pattern:

student’s error

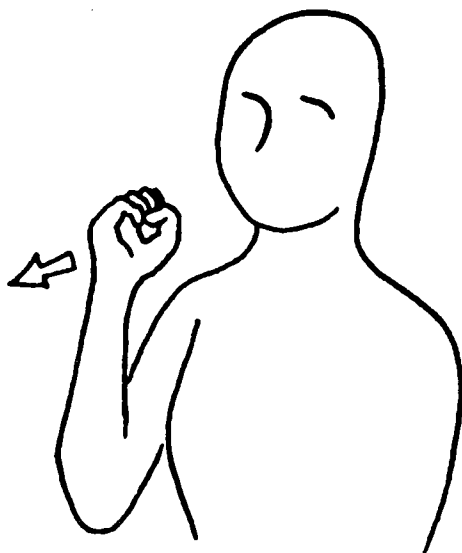
→ teacher’s initiative with gesture

→ student’s attempt at correction

→ teacher’s confirmation with gesture.

The teacher does not provide the student with the correct answer right after the error was made. Instead, she sends a gestural cue without verbalization to let the student attempt self-correction. The teacher also combines gestures with oral utterances to provide instruction in lines 14, 16, and 22. The gestures function to highlight the teacher’s instructions in the interaction. Her use of gesture also plays a significant role in completing the error correction sequence. The teacher confirms the student’s correct utterance without interrupting her by using the particle gesture while the student utters the particle. The synchronization of the student’s verbal utterance and the teacher’s gesture demonstrates the cooperative construction of meaning in interaction by multiple participants.

The interaction of gestures and verbal utterances produces multiple simultaneous error correction functions. For example, in line 6 the gesture carries three functions: F1, F2, and F3. The teacher sends the gesture (8-1-1) after “kara (from)” (incorrect particle) and, then, before the student’s next word. This implies that the teacher’s gesture informs the student of the existence of an error (F1). The timing of the teacher’s interruption also indicates where the student has made an error in the utterance (F2). Further, the teacher’s hand shape clarifies the type of error (F3).



**Figure 10.**  
Gesture, 8-1-1

Excerpt:

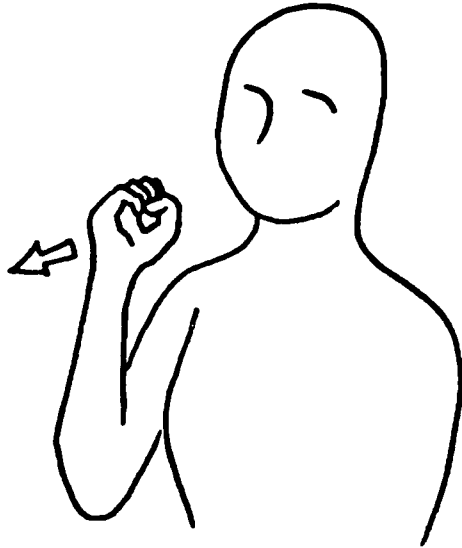
4 S2: Shiidaa rapizzu no konpyuutaa  
Cedar Rapids of computer

5 sofutoweeaa kanpanii kara  
software company from  
**'from a computer software  
company in Cedar Rapids'**

6 K: (pause) 8-1-1 F1/F2/F3

7 S2: aah

The final gesture (8-1-12), in line 27, carries three functions: F2, F3, and F4. In the last sentence of this excerpt (lines 26–28), S2 produces a whole correct sentence. She correctly verbalizes “de [for]” for the particle, where previously she had said “kara [from].” As S2 produces “de [for],” the teacher produces the particle gesture and shows it to the class. This synchronized production of S2’s verbal utterance “de [for]” and the teacher’s gesture indicates the place where S2 had earlier made an error (F2). The particle gesture also clarifies the type of error she had made (F3). The cooperative work between S2 and the teacher confirms the correction (F4).



**Figure 11.**  
Gesture, 8-1-12

Excerpt:

- 26 S2: Shiidaa rapizzu no konpyuutaa  
Cedar Rapids of computer
- 27 sofutowea kanpanii de 8-1-12 F2/ F3/ F4  
software company for
- 28 shigoto wo shimashi-ta.  
work (OM) do-PAST  
**'I worked for a computer software company in Cedar Rapids.'**

The two gestures 8-1-1 and 8-1-12 exemplify multiple concurrent functions in the context of error correction. They also demonstrate how the interaction of the gesture and the verbal utterance produces these multiple functions.

Gestures indicating specific language errors used along with verbal utterances are highly effective at directing the student to correct an error. However, general gestures used in the classroom appear to be not as effective. In line 14, the teacher forms the gesture (8-2-1) to indicate "no," saying "kara kara de ja [It is not from from for]." However, the student ignores or does not understand the statement and the gesture. It is



assumed that neither the verbal utterance nor the gesture was comprehensible for S2.

This time, in line 22, S2 hears the teacher's verbal utterance, "Hajime kara [from the beginning]," and sees the gesture for "speak up" (8-3-2). S2 does not respond, so the teacher repeats her utterance without the gesture. The student still does not respond, so the teacher translates her utterance into English and simultaneously produces the general gesture for encouraging the student to speak (line 24). Only then does the student respond (line 26). It is possible that S2 did not respond to the teacher's initial instruction (line 22) because of the teacher's inconsistent coupling of several gestures and verbal utterances. The teacher applies this same gesture to several different verbal utterances. In lines 20 and 22, the teacher verbalizes "Moo ichido [Once more]" and "Hajime kara [From the beginning]" but uses the same gesture (8-3-1/8-3-2). In lines 22 and 24, the teacher applies two different gestures (8-3-2/8-4-1) to the semantically identical verbal utterance. This is a case in which the student became confused because of the teacher's inconsistent use of gesture.

## Summary of Findings

Analysis of Segment 8 reveals that there is a consistent pattern of error correction involving both gesture and verbal utterance:

Student's error

→ teacher's initiative with gesture

→ student's attempt at correction

→ teacher's confirmation with gesture.

When a student produces an error, the teachers may not give the correct oral answer immediately. Instead, they send oral and gestural cues to encourage the student to produce the correct answer by him/herself. The teachers typically integrate their gestures with their verbal utterances. The gesture is sometimes synchronized with the verbal utterance, while at other times it is produced alone. The teachers make use of the timing between the gesture and the verbal utterance to more effectively send their message to the receiver. Occasionally, a mismatch between the gesture and the verbal utterance occurs. This mismatch can cause confusion on the part of the student.

The student's attempt at error correction is followed by the teacher's confirmation. The confirmation can take any of the following forms:

(1) integration of the teacher's gesture with the student's verbal utterance, (2) integration of the teacher's gesture with the teacher's verbal utterance, (3) teacher production of the gesture alone, or (4) teacher production of a verbal utterance alone. Gestures used by the teacher during her initiatives and the student's attempt at correction may also be synchronized with a verbal utterance, or they may exist alone.

Through the careful use of gestures and verbal utterances, the teacher is able to send information to students without interrupting the conversation in the classroom. The teacher can, for example, display a specific error correction gesture at the appropriate moment when the student verbalizes a correct utterance. Cooperative communication between teacher and student can confirm a correct utterance in its context. The combination of gesture with a verbal utterance makes it possible to create several layers of interaction at once.

## Conclusion

The present research has studied the significance of gesture in communication during error correction in the Japanese language classroom. The findings confirm the important role gesture plays and clearly demonstrate the interaction of gesture with verbal utterances during error correction. The following presents a concise summary of the findings from the present research, suggests implications for future studies, and proposes some implications for foreign language teacher training.

## Summary

First, the present study introduced two types of gestures used for error correction in the foreign language classroom: specific language error gestures and general gestures. The first type identifies the error itself; the second type promotes verbal communication between the teacher and the student(s). Second, the data from the present study show that when gesture is considered as part of the error correction sequence, the revised sequential pattern is very similar to that found when only verbal utterances are considered:

Student's error

→ teacher's initiative with gesture

→ student's attempt at correction

→ teacher's confirmation with gesture.

Third, the sequence above indicates that these teachers often provided an opportunity to let students correct their own errors by using gestures that encourage students to self-correct. The interaction of gesture and verbal utterance creates this opportunity. Fourth, language teachers in this study accomplished multiple error correction functions concurrently by combining gesture and verbal utterance. Fifth, gestures allowed the language teacher to send a message to the student without interrupting the student's verbal utterance. Sixth, some gestures synchronized well with the verbal utterance; others were mismatched. This mismatch, in terms of timing, may have informed the student of error and created multiple layers of communication, but in terms of meaning, may have caused the student to be confused.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

The present study is an exploratory study of the integration of gesture and verbal utterances during error correction in the L2 classroom. However, its scope is narrow; the use of gesture in L2 teaching is a large topic with sufficient potential to be explored further. The following are some suggestions for future study.

Future research is needed to observe more cases than the present study was able to examine. Future studies should examine segments in which no gesture appears during error correction. Further research is also required to examine the comprehensibility of language teachers' gestures. The present study collected data exclusively through close observation of data segments. However, data from interviews with teachers would reveal the teachers' views of why they use particular gestures. Interviews with students would also be important in order to study the effectiveness of the teachers' gestures in the classroom.

Student gesture is also a significant aspect of research on gesture in the classroom. The present study focused on teacher gesture only. However, if a future study includes student gestures, this might reveal the interaction between teacher and student gestures and verbal utterances. Future research could also further analyze cultural differences and similarities between the teachers' and students' gestures, and individual variations among different teachers' gestures.

Future research on the role of gesture in other areas of foreign language instruction is warranted. The communicative approach to foreign

language teaching encourages the teacher to use the target language exclusively. This means that teachers must find nonverbal means to communicate with the students when they do not comprehend. What teachers do gesturally to enhance comprehension is, therefore, an important area of study. Finally, further research on nonverbal cues other than gesture promises to be a worthy area of study (e.g., facial expressions). These nonverbal cues may provide the L2 student with a rich source of information for understanding verbal utterances, especially in the beginning stages of Japanese language learning.

### **Pedagogical Implications**

While the current research is preliminary in nature, it does have some implications for the training of Japanese foreign language (JFL) teachers and the presentation of error corrections in the classroom. As this research clearly demonstrates, gesture as used by the teachers both enhanced and interfered with communication. Therefore, as part of JFL teacher training, teachers should be taught to be aware of their gestures and their effects on communication. Perhaps a body of standardized gestures could be developed and taught to JFL teachers to nonverbally encourage students to self-correct, continue speaking, etc. This is especially important when teachers use the communicative approach. Teachers should also be made aware of when their gestures interfere with communication so that they can correct their gesturing.

This research showed a general pattern of error correction that incorporates the use of gesture to maximize the student's opportunity to self-correct. It may be that this patterning should be formalized as part of training teachers to use the communicative approach.

### **Notes**

1. This article is a revised version of a Master's thesis completed at the University of Iowa. Many thanks to my thesis director, Professor Junko Mori, for her guidance and encouragement. Thanks also to my husband, Naoki Ueda, for furnishing the original drawings used here. I would also like to thank Professor L. Kathy Heilenman for her encouragement and support during the course of this study.
2. More segment descriptions are available from the author.

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# INVESTIGATING THE PROPERTIES OF ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENTS AND THE SETTING OF PROFICIENCY STANDARDS FOR ADMISSION INTO UNIVERSITY SECOND LANGUAGE COURSES

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## Introduction

The introduction of the Proficiency Guidelines (ACTFL 1986) and the corresponding Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) have placed heavy emphasis on the assessment of oral language ability. As Teschner (1991) writes, in the early 1980s the notion of proficiency “often appeared to focus solely on speaking in general and the oral interview in particular” (p. ix). Notwithstanding the contribution of the proficiency movement to assessing speaking, the assessment of the other modalities is also critical in order to get a rich and more complete picture of learners’ second language (L2) abilities. Consequently, in recent years educators have increasingly encompassed a broader conceptualization of proficiency which includes all four modalities. The 1990s have accordingly witnessed increased activity focusing on the development of proficiency-based instruments for assessing speaking as well as the other modalities. Institutions, such as The Ohio State University (Birchbichler, Corl, and Deville 1993; Corl, Harlow, Macián, and Saunders 1996; Robinson 1996), the University of South Carolina (Mosher 1989; Fleak 1991), and The University of Iowa (Wherritt, Druva-Roush, and Moore 1990) have assumed a prominent role in developing proficiency-based assessments in the various modalities to be used in undergraduate language programs.

Since the mid 1980s, the University of Minnesota has also been one of the leading institutions in setting up college-wide entrance and graduation L2 proficiency requirements and developing instruments based on the ACTFL Guidelines for assessing all four modalities (Barnes, Klee, and Wakefield 1990; Lange 1987; Lange, Prior, and Sims 1992). Today, it continues its commitment to proficiency-based assessment and, as part of the Minnesota Articulation Project (MNAP), has recently developed new assessments to replace the initial entrance proficiency instruments. (The University of Minnesota is also working to revamp the graduation proficiency instruments.) These MNAP instruments have been described in detail in Chalhoub-Deville (1997).

While Chalhoub-Deville (1997) presents detailed information about the design, content, and format of the MNAP instruments, the present paper documents their psychometric properties. More specifically, the present paper describes the standard setting process that preceded the administration of the various instruments and reports the results of field testing at the University of Minnesota. A brief description of the MNAP and its assessments follows.

## **The MNAP Assessment Instruments**

MNAP is a statewide effort that includes the University of Minnesota, various public and private schools, community colleges, private colleges, and a state university. The MNAP agenda includes the development of an operational model and a corresponding battery of assessment instruments for coordinating L2 outcomes across levels of instruction and educational systems in Minnesota. MNAP has produced assessment instruments in French, German, and Spanish for assessing students' L2 proficiency as they move from the secondary into the postsecondary levels. Specifically, the purpose of these instruments is to help determine if students can perform in the various modalities at the Intermediate Low (IL) level, the proficiency standard required for students to enroll in second-year French, German, or Spanish programs at the postsecondary level.

In the remainder of this section and article, the discussion will focus on the MNAP reading and writing assessments that were field tested at the University of Minnesota in the summer of 1996. (Instruments exist for all four modalities, but present space constraints permit discussion of only these two.)



The reading and writing instruments developed in French, German, and Spanish are thematically based. Each assessment instrument has a theme deemed appropriate to incoming students (e.g., an exchange program, pen pal, etc.). Each of the thematically oriented reading instruments, for example, includes several segments. Each segment consists of a *situation*, a *text*, and a set of related *items*. The *situation*, which serves as an advance organizer, prepares test-takers to approach the reading text by helping them access relevant schemata. The *text* refers to the passage that students are asked to read. Selected texts deal with topics such as descriptions of famous persons, vacations, dining, daily routines, etc., and various text types (such as notes, biography articles, advertisements, etc.). The *items* developed for the reading texts are multiple-choice in format and presented in English. (See example in Appendix A.) Each reading instrument includes 35 items, with each item weighted one point. The total possible score on each of the reading assessment instruments, therefore, is 35.

Similar to the reading items, each of the thematically connected writing instruments includes six segments. Each segment has a *situation*, a *warm-up*, and a *task*. The *situation* provides detailed description of the immediate context within which test-takers are asked to compose their responses. Following the *situation*, test-takers are provided with a *warm-up* activity to help them organize their thoughts and language before they start writing. These *warm-up* activities are not scored. The *task* points out what test-takers need to write about. The *task* specifies the relevant content and the required length of the response. The entire writing assessment instrument is presented in English. (See example in Appendix B.) The reader is referred to Chalhoub-Deville (1997) for additional information concerning these instruments.

The rating scheme used to assess students' performance on the writing instruments is included in Appendix C. Raters are presented with a detailed scoring scheme that includes four principal aspects: comprehensibility, task fulfillment, vocabulary, and discourse. Brief descriptions are provided for each of these criteria. Such descriptions are given not only for the required IL level but also for the Novice High and Intermediate Mid levels. The description of the IL and its two adjacent levels is meant to clarify and help raters better focus on the features characteristic of the intended IL level. Raters are also provided with language-specific rating criteria and sample performance examples. In assessing students' L2 writing performance, raters are asked to make dichotomous ratings (1, 0) on each of the above

listed four criteria. The total possible score on each of the writing instruments, therefore, is 24—four points for each of the six writing segments.

## Setting Passing Scores

While the reading items and the writing tasks are selected to reflect intermediate level properties according to the ACTFL Guidelines, it is the test-takers' performance on these items and tasks that determines whether examinees have achieved the designated IL level. The question that arises, therefore, is what score on each of the reading and writing instruments is equivalent to an IL performance? More specifically, what scores out of 35 for reading and out of 24 for writing are deemed appropriate for the test-taker to be judged as performing at the ACTFL IL level in each of these two modalities?

Often it is not stated how cut or passing scores are decided upon on L2 tests. Typically, test developers rely on their knowledge and experience to decide on the score or the number of tasks that test-takers must complete successfully in order to pass. Another popular approach is to allow a given percent of students to pass, e.g., the top 20%. In situations where passing rate restrictions are not a factor to consider, such decisions are not appropriate. Why allow the top 20% and not the top 15%, 25%, or 35% of the test-takers to pass? What is to be inferred about the test-takers' abilities when passing scores are decided upon in a relatively arbitrary fashion? A systematic approach to setting passing scores that takes into account issues such as the purpose and content of the instruments and involves the potential test score users is likely to produce meaningful scores and afford a more appropriate use of those scores.

Pass score decisions can be made based on systematic procedures. The manual by Livingston and Zieky (1982), for example, is a classic guidebook that provides practical explanations and descriptions for setting passing score standards relevant to various educational tests. In setting passing scores, several issues need to be considered, including the judges, the standard setting method and corresponding process, and the appropriateness of the derived passing scores. These issues are addressed in the following sections.

### The Judges

French, German, and Spanish educators at the University of Minnesota were asked to participate in the standard setting sessions. The educators

represented both the faculty members and graduate teaching assistants who typically teach the language courses. As such, these educators are well-acquainted with the performance expected of students at this level. Additionally, given the University of Minnesota's long tradition with regard to proficiency-based testing, these educators have extensive experience with the ACTFL Guidelines.

Eleven judges, including both faculty and graduate teaching assistants, participated in the standard setting process. Four judges participated in each of the French and German sessions and three in the Spanish one. Typically, in standard setting sessions, the more judges that can be included the better. The rationale for selecting eleven judges in the present study is the similarity in terms of orientation between this group of judges and those they represent. Also, given that the judges in each language group are asked to perform their ratings independently, it can be argued that any derived passing score has been cross-validated.

### **The Standard Setting Method**

Several approaches can be used for setting scores based on evaluations of assessment instrument items. A common approach is based on the borderline test-taker concept where Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) are asked to hypothesize regarding the performance of borderline test-takers on each item in a given assessment instrument. There are different methods that follow this approach. The most common methods are the Nedelsky method (Nedelsky 1954), the Ebel method (Ebel 1972), and the Angoff method (Angoff 1984). The Nedelsky method is used with multiple-choice items only. In this method, the SMEs identify the distracters in each item that a borderline test-taker can clearly recognize as not plausible, and it is assumed that the test-taker would *randomly* identify the correct answer from the remaining plausible options. The Ebel method is more elaborate. It is a two-stage process where SMEs first classify test items into categories, based on the importance and difficulty of each item, and then estimate the proportion of test items a borderline test-taker can answer correctly. The Angoff procedure requires SMEs to provide the probability of a borderline test-taker (or the proportion out of 100 borderline test-takers) being able to respond to every test item correctly. Both the Ebel and the Angoff procedures can be used with non-multiple-choice items. (For more information about these procedures see Livingston and Zieky 1982.)

In determining the method for setting the pass scores on the French, German, and Spanish assessment instruments, three interrelated factors were paramount. First, it was important that the method be easily explained to the judges. In order for the judges to be able to apply the method appropriately and to be confident about using the ensuing pass score, it was critical that the method be readily comprehensible. The second factor pertained to the ease of and the speed by which the procedures can be completed. These procedures can be quite involved and take an inordinate amount of time, and so it was decided to choose a method that permits the completion of the procedures in a relatively short amount of time. Third, given that the instruments include both multiple-choice and detailed scoring criteria, it was necessary to choose a method that can be used for setting pass scores for both types of items. Given that any method requires significant effort on the part of the judges, it was critical not to overburden the judges by requiring them to learn two different methods. Given these considerations, the Angoff method was chosen. As Livingston and Zieky (1982) write, "Angoff's method is the easiest of the three methods to explain and the fastest to use" (p. 54). Additionally, the Angoff method can be used with both multiple-choice items and detailed scoring criteria.

### **The Standard Setting Process**

Independent standard setting sessions were held for each of the French, German, and Spanish groups. The participating judges in these sessions were provided with copies of the assessment instruments. The judges were asked to imagine 100 borderline IL students they are likely to encounter in their L2 classes and to decide on the proportion who are likely to perform successfully on each of the reading items and writing criteria. After a practice exercise, all participating judges independently provided their percentages. Nevertheless, when the researcher noted variation in the judges' percentages of more than ten to fifteen points on any given item, the judges were asked to discuss their reasons for providing such diverse ratings. Consequently, the judges were allowed to change their ratings if they deemed it appropriate.

The passing score was calculated by adding the average proportions and ratings provided by the judges for each item and computing the mean of those averaged ratings. The results of the French, German, and Spanish standard setting sessions for each of the writing and reading assessment

*Table 1*  
**Proposed Passing Scores Based on the Angoff Method**

	<b>French</b>	<b>German</b>	<b>Spanish</b>
Reading (total possible 35 points)	29.36	28.70	27.01
Writing (total possible 24 points)	20.44	20.72	21.07

instruments are presented in Table 1 above. As Table 1 shows, the passing scores computed for the reading instruments (where the total possible score on each of the three language reading instruments is 35) are 29.36 in French, 28.70 in German, and 27.01 in Spanish. As for the writing instruments (where the total possible score on each of the three language writing instruments is 24), the passing scores are 20.44 in French, 20.72 in German, and 21.07 in Spanish.

Although the three language group judges worked independently, they arrived at quite comparable passing scores for both the reading and writing instruments. Such score comparability may be attributed to the similarity of the instruments in terms of purpose, content, and format across the three languages. Additionally, the background information obtained from the test-takers (see Test-Taker Samples section) yields similar profiles of students in the three language groups, which may also have contributed to the judges' comparable passing score decisions.

While there were no a priori intentions to set identical passing scores across the three languages, the judges, based on the closeness of the derived scores, decided to adopt the same passing scores for each of the reading and writing instruments. (These scores are reported in the following section.) It was reasoned that, given the judgmental nature of the process, it would be more meaningful to present students with the same passing scores than to have to explain the small differences. Nevertheless the appropriateness of such a decision remains to be seen with regard to actual student performances.

### **Passing Scores and Standard Error of Measurement**

When setting passing scores, it is recommended that the standard error of measurement (SEM) be considered (APA 1985). The SEM provides information about potential fluctuations in test scores due to measurement error. Ebel (1979) defines SEM as "an estimate of the standard deviation

of the errors of measurement associated with the test scores in a given set” (p. 379). In the present context, SEM is computed to estimate the variations around the proposed passing scores. Given the criterion-referenced nature of the MNAP instruments, i.e., the focus on IL performance, it was decided to use Berk’s (1984 in Bachman, 1990) formula for computing the SEM indices:

$$\sqrt{\frac{x_i (n - x_i)}{n - 1}}$$

where  $x_i$  is the proposed passing score, and  $n$  is the number of items on the test

Tables 2 and 3 (page 185) present the SEM for various passing scores on the reading and writing assessment instruments respectively. The figures in each table apply to the three language groups, given that each of the French, German, and Spanish modality instruments include an equal number of items and the same proposed passing scores, which is the information needed to compute SEM using Berk’s formula. Tables 2 and 3 report estimates for one SEM and two SEM. The one SEM indicates 68% probability that the proposed passing scores fall within the range computed. The two SEM provides with 95% confidence the range expected for the proposed passing scores. Although the tables report the band scores for both one and two SEM, i.e., the 68% and 95% probability, it is argued that given the nature of the test, 68% is sufficiently stringent. Consequently, the present discussion will focus on the 68% probability figures.

With regard to the reading instruments, the figures in Table 2 show that the one SEM at the proposed score 29 is 2.26, which, when rounded to the nearest whole number, yields a band score of 27–31. This indicates that we are approximately 68% confident that the proposed passing score of 29 is between 27–31. Given the lower band of the score, it would be recommended, therefore, that the passing score for the reading instruments be set at 27. Indeed, the language experts in French, German, and Spanish, after some discussion, agreed to set the passing score at 27.

With regard to the writing instruments, Table 3 shows that the one SEM at the proposed score of 21 is 1.66. When rounded to the nearest whole score, the 1.66 SEM gives a band score of 19–23. Although the recommendation would be to set the passing score at 19, the language experts in all three languages felt very strongly that a score of 19 was not equivalent to

IL on these writing instruments. The language expert judges agreed to set the passing score at 21.

Again, the appropriateness of these reading and writing passing scores, empirically derived from expert judgment, must be further examined based on the test-takers' actual performance. The following sections report on the results of the analyses performed on the data obtained from administering the reading and writing instruments to students seeking enrollment in the French, German, or Spanish programs at the University of Minnesota.

*Table 2*  
Confidence Intervals for Passing Scores on the French,  
German, and Spanish Reading Instruments

Passing Score	Band with 68%		Band with 95%	
	1 SEM	Probability	2 SEM	Probability
29	2.26	26.74–31.26	4.52	24.48–33.52
28	2.40	25.60–30.40	4.80	23.20–32.80
27	2.52	24.48–29.52	5.04	21.96–32.04
26	2.62	23.38–28.62	5.24	20.76–31.24
25	2.71	22.29–27.71	5.42	19.58–30.42
24	2.79	21.21–26.79	5.58	18.42–29.58
23	2.85	20.15–25.85	5.70	17.30–28.70

*Table 3*  
Confidence Intervals for Passing Scores on the French,  
German, and Spanish Writing Instruments

Passing Score	Band with 68%		Band with 95%	
	1 SEM	Probability	2 SEM	Probability
21	1.66	19.34–22.66	3.32	17.68–24.32
20	1.87	18.13–21.87	3.74	16.26–23.74
19	2.03	16.97–21.03	4.06	14.94–23.06
18	2.17	15.83–20.17	4.34	15.83–22.34
17	2.27	14.73–19.27	4.54	12.46–21.54

## Test-Taker Samples

The reading and writing MNAP instruments were administered to incoming students at the University of Minnesota during summer orientation, 1996. Information regarding the number of students who took the various assessment instruments is summarized in Table 4. The figures indicate a much bigger sample size in Spanish as compared to French and German, which reflects the typically larger enrollment in Spanish programs. Additionally, Table 4 reports two sets of sample sizes for the French and Spanish reading instruments because those who took the reading instruments in August and September received slightly different ones. Based on the results of item analyses performed on the data from the initial set of test administration in June and July, minor revisions were made to six items on the French and three items on the Spanish reading instruments for the August-September testing period.

*Table 4*  
French, German, and Spanish Student Samples

	French	German	Spanish
Reading: June–July	157	na	482
Reading: August–September	85	na	255
Reading: June–September		208	
Writing	240	206	737

Responses to a background questionnaire administered to these test-takers indicate that over 90% of the students were 18 years old or younger. Gender breakdowns indicate that the French sample includes 74% females and 26% males; the German comprises 47% females and 52% males; and the Spanish sample consists of 66% females and 34% males. Over 96% of all the test-takers report that their parents attained at least high school degrees. With regard to academic achievement, over 91% of the test-takers in all three language samples report high school GPAs between 3.00–4.00. Similarly, over 91% of the test-takers in the three samples indicate that the last grade received in their L2 classes was a “B” or better. Finally, approximately 98% of the students in all three languages report the last grade received in an English test to be at least a “B.”

As for instruction in L2, 41% of the test-takers in the French sample indicate having had two to three years of French and 55% indicate having



studied it four years or more. In the German sample, 47% state that they had two to three years of the language and 50% had four years or more. In the Spanish sample, while 51% of the students report having had two to three years of the language, 47% indicate having had four years or more. In terms of time elapsed since last enrolled in the L2 class, responses show that for 79% of the French and German and 83% of the Spanish students it had been one year or less. Approximately 15% of the students in all three languages report that two years had gone by since they were last enrolled in an L2 class. Finally, students in the three language groups report having spent minimal time in a community where the L2 is the primary language of communication.

Regarding motivation factors such as the likelihood of taking a second language if not required, students in all three languages were evenly distributed on the five-point scale for each of the three languages (1 = very unlikely, 5 = very likely). A similar trend in responses is observed for students' likelihood of studying the L2 past the language requirement.

## Results

### Descriptive Statistics

#### Reading Instruments

For each of the three languages, the total possible score on the reading instrument is 35 points. The means for the two French reading instrument administrations are 24.87 for June–July and 27.06 for August–September with standard deviations of 4.42 and 5.52 respectively. The mean for the German reading instrument is 26.96 with a standard deviation of 4.72. As for the Spanish reading instrument, the mean is 26.79 for June–July and 27.99 for August–September with standard deviations of 4.96 and 4.78 respectively. These figures show that the distribution of scores in all three languages tends to be slightly negatively skewed, as would be expected in criterion referenced assessment where the majority of the students are expected to perform successfully.

The internal consistency reliability, Cronbach's alpha, indices for these reading instruments are as follows: French (June–July) .70 and (August–September) .83; German .77; and Spanish (June–July) .81 and (August–September) .77. These indices show adequate reliability for criterion referenced assessment instruments.

## Writing Instruments

Ratings provided a range from 0–24 for French, German, and Spanish with means of 17.69, 18.04, and 19.44 and standard deviations of 6.21, 6.17, and 6.31 respectively. These statistics point out that scores on the writing instruments are negatively skewed with the majority of the students performing successfully on the writing tasks.

Internal consistency indices have also been computed. Cronbach's alpha for each of the French and German samples is .93, and reaches .95 for the Spanish sample, which is quite high. With regard to inter-rater reliability, a random sample of 30 writing performances for each of French, German, and Spanish have been re-rated by a second independent set of raters. Inter-rater reliability for the French sample is .96; .91 for German; and .93 for Spanish, indicating a high level of agreement.

## Analysis of Variance Results

In addition to the descriptive analyses, inferential statistics are employed to further investigate the properties of the reading and writing instruments. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to investigate whether the instruments differentiate among test-takers' language proficiency as measured in terms of the number of years of high school study. The following sections summarize the results of the ANOVA analyses.

**Reading instruments.** One-way ANOVA analyses are performed on each of the three language groups to examine whether there is a significant difference in mean scores on the reading instruments by years of L2 study in school (2 years, 3 years, and  $\geq 4$  years). In French, analyses are performed on the scores from the 29 items that appeared in the instrument on the test administrations from June through September. In German, analyses are performed on the scores from the 35 items. Spanish analyses are performed on the scores from the 33 items that appeared in the instrument on the test administrations of June through September. (See reduced number explanation under Test-Taker Samples). ANOVA results show significance for each of the three language samples (French:  $F(2, 188) = 7.30$ ; German:  $F(2, 161) = 11.09$ ; Spanish:  $F(2, 578) = 81.48$ ) at  $p < .001$ .

The Scheffé post-hoc analysis, a very stringent and conservative procedure, is used to examine the statistical significance of all possible pairwise comparisons. With regard to the French group, there is a significant difference between test-takers who have 2 years versus  $\geq 4$  years of L2

*Table 5*  
**Means and Standard Deviations (in parentheses)**  
**for the Reading Instruments According to**  
**Years of L2 Study in School**

	<b>French</b> (n=189; 24 points)	<b>German</b> (n=162; 35 points)	<b>Spanish</b> (n=579; 33 points)
2 years	20.10 (4.11)	24.29 (4.44)	22.36 (5.00)
3 years	20.93 (4.02)	26.30 (4.30)	25.71 (4.46)
4 yrs or >	22.82 (3.70)	28.17 (4.01)	27.96 (3.47)

study and those who have 3 years versus  $\geq 4$  years. The 2 years versus 3 years pair-wise comparison is not significant. In German the only significant difference is between those who have 2 years of German and  $\geq 4$  years. Finally, all three pair-wise comparisons of Spanish are significant. Table 5 reports the means and standard deviations for each level of the three languages. It is important to note that the means indicate that the higher the number of years of L2 study, the better the test-takers' performance on the reading instruments, providing evidence to support the desired function of these instruments.

**Writing instruments.** One-way ANOVA analyses are also performed to examine whether there is a significant difference in mean scores on the writing instruments by years of L2 study in the school. ANOVA results are significant for each of the three language samples (French:  $F(2, 164) = 28.83$ ; German:  $F(2, 155) = 8.34$ ; Spanish:  $F(2, 586) = 131.44$  at  $p < .001$ ). Scheffé post-hoc analyses indicate a significant difference among all three pair-wise comparisons in French. In German, similar to the pattern observed on the reading assessment instrument, the only significant difference is between 2 years and  $\geq 4$  years. Also similar to the pattern noted on the Spanish reading instrument, the three Spanish writing pair-wise comparisons are significant. Finally, as observed in Table 6, the higher the number of years of L2 study, the better the test-takers' performance on the writing instruments, again supporting the intended function of these instruments.

In summary, the descriptive analyses provide evidence to support the quality of the instruments. Additionally, the ANOVA and post-hoc analyses indicate that these instruments are, in general, discriminating

*Table 6*  
**Means and Standard Deviations for the  
 Writing Instruments According to  
 Years of L2 Study in School**

	<b>French</b> (n = 165; 24 points)	<b>German</b> (n = 156; 24 points)	<b>Spanish</b> (n = 579; 24 points)
2 years	10.59 (6.20)	15.29 (6.42)	13.59 (8.07)
3 years	15.18 (6.88)	17.26 (7.19)	19.21 (5.50)
4 yrs or >	19.93 (4.22)	20.01 (4.91)	22.38 (2.59)

among students with varying years of L2 study in school. Finally, test-takers who have more years of L2 study exhibit better performance on these instruments.

### **Passing Rates**

Given the judgmental nature of the procedure for setting cut scores, it is critical to also examine these scores based on the actual performance of the test-taker groups for which the instruments are intended. Table 7 shows the passing rates at various cutoff scores, including the proposed Angoff-based passing score. The figures indicate that 55% of the French and German students and 64% of the Spanish students would pass the reading assessments at the proposed passing score of 27. As would be expected, the lower the passing score, the greater the students' passing rate.

With regard to the writing instruments, Table 8 shows that 45%, 47%, and 66% of the French, German, and Spanish students respectively would pass the writing assessments at the proposed passing score of 21. Also, similar to the reading figures, the percentage of passing increases with

*Table 7*  
**Passing Rates on the Reading Assessment Instruments**

	<b>Various Proposed Passing Scores</b>				
	27	26	25	24	23
French (n = 73)	55%	67%	70%	73%	81%
German (n = 199)	55%	64%	72%	79%	83%
Spanish (n = 215)	64%	72%	77%	80%	86%

*Table 8*  
**Passing Rates on the Writing Assessment Instruments**

	Various Proposed Passing Scores				
	21	20	19	18	17
French (n = 240)	45%	52%	60%	64%	68%
German (n = 206)	47%	54%	59%	64%	70%
Spanish (n = 737)	66%	70%	73%	77%	79%

lower passing scores as cutoff points. In deciding on the appropriateness of the passing score, an important variable to consider further is the number of years of studying the L2 in high school. This variable, as the data below shows, has proven to be more important regarding passing rates than the different passing scores.

### **Passing Rates and Years of Studying the L2**

The percentages of test-takers passing the reading and writing instruments according to the number of years of studying L2 in school are presented in Tables 9 and 10 respectively. For both reading and writing, figures show relatively minimal change in passing rates across the various passing scores, especially at the first two levels of L2 study. This trend is observed across the three language groups. The striking change in passing percentage occurs when looking across the different years of studying the L2, and in particular at four years or more.

*Table 9*  
**Passing Rate on the Reading Assessment Instruments: Years of L2 Study in School by Various Cutoff Scores**

Passing Score	French (n = 55)			German (n = 175)			Spanish (n = 175)		
	2 yrs	3 yrs	4 yrs or >	2 yrs	3 yrs	4 yrs or >	2 yrs	3 yrs	4 yrs or >
27	2%	9%	40%	6%	14%	32%	6%	15%	38%
26	6%	9%	47%	8%	15%	37%	10%	15%	42%
25	6%	9%	49%	11%	17%	39%	12%	19%	43%
24	6%	9%	53%	13%	20%	43%	13%	20%	43%
23	6%	16%	55%	13%	21%	46%	15%	21%	45%

Table 10

Passing Rate on the Writing Assessment Instruments:  
Years of L2 Study in School by Various Cutoff Scores

Passing Score	French (n = 198)			German (n = 162)			Spanish (n = 607)		
	2 yrs	3 yrs	4 yrs or >	2 yrs	3 yrs	4 yrs or >	2 yrs	3 yrs	4 yrs or >
21	1%	11%	32%	4%	13%	28%	6%	17%	41%
20	1%	13%	36%	6%	15%	32%	7%	18%	43%
19	1%	13%	43%	7%	15%	36%	8%	19%	44%
18	1%	14%	47%	9%	15%	38%	9%	20%	45%
17	2%	14%	49%	11%	18%	41%	10%	21%	46%

The figures in both the reading and writing tables show prominent increases in the percentage of passing for those students who have studied the L2 for three years versus two. The dramatic increase in the percentage of passing occurs, however, for those who have studied the L2 for four years or more. In short, the figures in Tables 9 and 10 show that passing scores, while important, are not as critical for passing the reading and writing assessment instruments as the number of years the test-takers have studied the L2. The findings of the present study send a strong message to teachers, students, counselors, administrators, and parents regarding students' preparation in L2 in the schools. Based on the current findings, students are more likely to be judged as performing at the IL level on the reading and writing instruments if they have studied French, German, or Spanish for at least four years.

Two issues need to be considered with regard to the appreciable increase in passing rates for those who have studied L2 for four years or more. First, at an advanced level of instruction self-selection becomes a confounding variable. In other words, it could be that the more proficient students are more likely to continue their L2 study. Second, it is also important to consider a potential threshold effect. It may be that the performance of students who have had four or more years of L2 instruction reflects a significant increase in proficiency level because students with two or three years of L2 study are invested more in restructuring and consolidating their L2. It may be that only after four years of study that progress in L2 proficiency becomes evident.

In conclusion, the passing score, although an important factor in determining passing rates, is not as critical a factor in substantially increasing the percentage of students likely to perform well on these instruments. The number of years of L2 study in school proves to be a more crucial variable in raising the passing percentage. Finally, with regard to the instruments themselves, the higher passing rates for those students who have had more years of L2 study provide additional evidence to support the adequate functioning of the present assessments.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this paper is to report the results of the analyses performed to investigate the properties of the MNAP reading and writing instruments currently used at the University of Minnesota to admit students into second-year French, German, and Spanish language courses. The present findings provide evidence to support the appropriateness of these instruments for their intended use. Nevertheless, more work is needed, especially in the following areas.

First, support for the continued refinement of these instruments is needed. Bernhardt and Deville (1991) argue forcefully that language departments are mandated to maintain and continue the development of their testing programs by allocating the necessary monetary and human resources. Bernhardt and Deville write that “without such an investment, a testing program does not exist. What does exist is a set of trials for students to survive” (p. 58). Similarly Cumming and Berwick (1996) argue that validation is a long-term process that leads to “ongoing modifications of test instruments, the construct, and the conceptual framework” underlying those instruments (p. 5). In short, the initial work performed on these assessment instruments is not sufficient to ensure their continued validity and reliability properties. A financial and human resource commitment is required to continue the research and development agenda necessary to monitor and document how these instruments are functioning. Additionally, such research can inform our understanding of the L2 proficiency constructs operationalized in these instruments.

Second, the passing scores need to be revisited. These instruments are intended to be used not only by the University of Minnesota, but also by all the MNAP institutions. Therefore, the University of Minnesota proposed passing scores need to be revisited with the MNAP members. Given the relatively diverse student populations that the various MNAP

members deal with in their institutions (secondary, postsecondary, private, public), it is possible that the members may arrive at slightly different passing scores. Additionally, with the more diverse student population, it would be interesting to examine how various passing scores compare to the number of years of L2 study with regard to passing rates. Such data have been collected and are currently being analyzed.

Also related to passing standards is the designated IL level. An issue that the University of Minnesota and other MNAP L2 educators will have to address is whether to employ the same IL standards over time. It is important to note here that given the changes envisioned in terms of student L2 preparation in the various educational systems, secondary and postsecondary, it is reasonable to assume that over time students taking the MNAP instruments will likely attain higher L2 proficiency. As a result, changes not only in the passing scores but also in the designated IL level may need to be revisited.

Third, a frequently encountered conception among MNAP educators, including those at the University of Minnesota, is that three years of language study at the secondary school level is on average equivalent to one year—two semesters or three quarters—at the postsecondary level. Such a belief is not restricted to MNAP members. Other educators and institutions have advanced variations on this rule (see Lange et al. 1992; Wherritt, Druva-Roush, and Moore 1990).

Additionally, according to an article in *Education Week* (Hendrie, November 26, 1997), New York state voted on November 14, 1997 to include a three year foreign language requirement (and passing a state exam) to its high school diploma. Other states, according to the same article, including Indiana, Louisiana, South Carolina, Texas, and Virginia, also require three years of an L2 study for a “special, more advanced diploma” (Hendrie, November 26, 1997, p. 13). In a subsequent article (Hendrie, December 3, 1997), the NY Regents decided to “rescind its earlier action and mandate that level of study [three years] only for students receiving an advanced diploma” (p. 3). The chancellor of the state board commented that the message from the schools was that the Regents “had really gone too far, too quickly” (p. 3). Notwithstanding, the three-year L2 requirement in the schools is quite popular and is believed by some to be equivalent to one year at the postsecondary level. The results of the present study, however, do not support such beliefs or findings. The present findings indicate that, in general, students need at least four years of L2 instruction at the school



level in order to enroll in a second-year L2 class at a postsecondary institution such as the University of Minnesota.

While it is beyond the scope of the present study to compare incoming student performance with that of students currently enrolled at the University of Minnesota, future research is planned to address this question. Again, such research is necessary as part of the continued investigation of the qualities of the present instruments.

Finally, Suen (1990) and Kane (1992) emphasize the importance of examining the validity of the decisions made based on assessment instruments with set passing scores. In the present context, this means documentation is needed to validate the decisions of admission or no admission into second-year French, German, and Spanish language courses based on the passing scores. Although data is not currently available to investigate the appropriateness of these decisions, anecdotal evidence from the Directors of Language Instruction (DLI) in the three language programs and from the Testing Office indicates that minimal migration has occurred since the implementation of these assessment instruments. In other words, students have, for the most part, been accurately admitted or denied admission into the second-year L2 courses. The DLIs and Testing Office personnel expressed satisfaction with the way the instruments have functioned. Nonetheless, further research is needed to investigate this issue.

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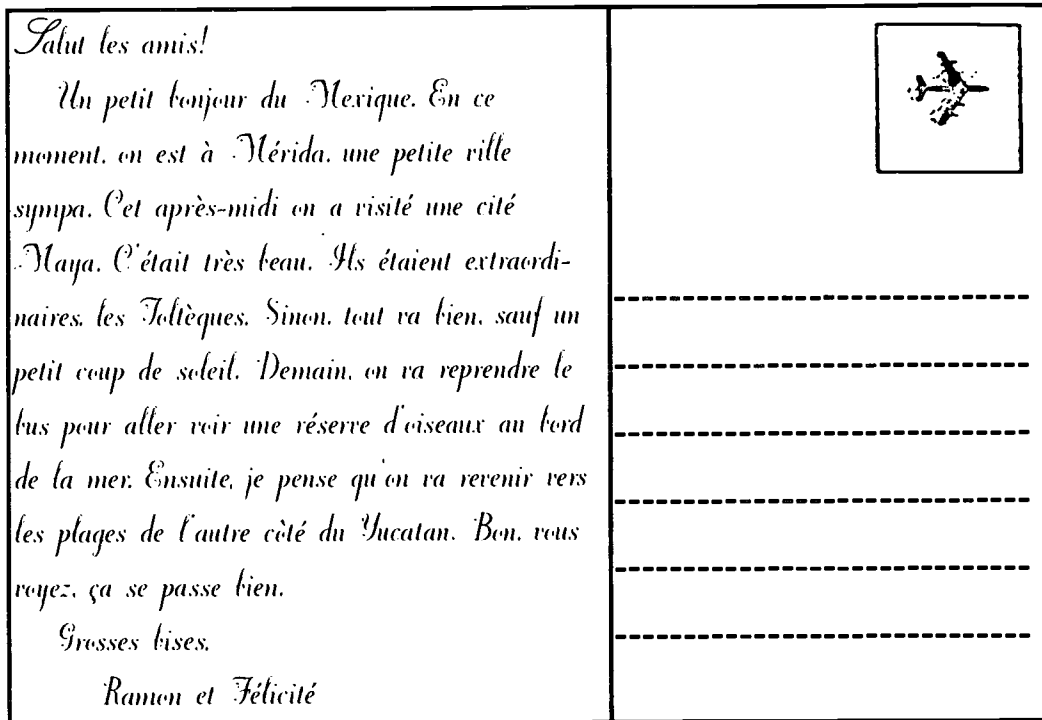
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## Appendix A

### French

#### Sample 1.

A classmate shows you this postcard that her family received from some French-speaking friends vacationing in Mexico.



1. Where were Ramon and Félicité when they wrote this postcard?
  - a. At a monument
  - b. On a beach
  - c. In a city
  - d. On a bus
  
2. What will Ramon and Félicité visit next?
  - a. Mayan ruins
  - b. An animal preserve
  - c. A sun god temple
  - d. An island off the Yucatan peninsula

## Appendix B

### Segment 2: A visitor

**Situation:** For your next entry, your teacher would like you to write some questions for a student from a French/German/Spanish-speaking area who will be coming to visit your class soon. The class has an opportunity for a question-and-answer session with the visitor and your teacher wants the class to be well prepared with questions.

**Warm-up:** Think about what you want to ask the French/German/Spanish-speaking visitor, then respond below in French/German/Spanish or in English. You may want to ask about the climate, interesting places to visit, about what young people do for work and entertainment (i.e., music, food, going out, etc.).

Things you want to know:

**Task:** In your journal, write at least five questions for the French/German/Spanish-speaking student who is coming to your class. You might want to include questions about: (1) the climate; (2) what young people do for work and entertainment; (3) interesting places to visit, etc.

**Write at least five questions for the visiting student in French/German/Spanish.**

## Appendix C Assessment Team: Rating Criteria for Entrance Proficiency Writing Test

	+ IM
<p><b>NH Novice-High</b> Novice High level examinees complete the tasks below the intended level. A NH performance will not sustain some of the necessary features of the Intermediate-Low profile. It will lack the <u>quality</u> and the <u>quantity</u> of the IL performance.</p> <p><b>COMPREHENSIBILITY</b> FREQUENTLY INCOMPREHENSIBLE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation, vocabulary, and frequent lapses into non-target language interfere with comprehension for a sympathetic reader</li> </ul> <p><b>TASK FULFILMENT</b> TASK DEMANDS UNFULFILLED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• response is not appropriate to the task as it is specified in <b>bold</b> on the test</li> <li>• amount of writing is insufficient to meet task requirements</li> </ul>	<p><b>Intermediate-Low</b> Examinees at the Intermediate-Low level adequately complete the writing tasks. Communication is successful, although there are errors.</p> <p><b>COMPREHENSIBILITY</b> GENERALLY COMPREHENSIBLE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation, vocabulary, and occasional lapses into non-target language do not interfere with comprehension for a sympathetic reader</li> </ul> <p><b>TASK FULFILLMENT</b> TASK DEMANDS ADEQUATELY FULFILLED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• response to task, as specified in <b>bold</b> on the test, is appropriate</li> <li>• number of sentences/clauses is sufficient to meet task requirements</li> </ul>
<p><b>Intermediate-Mid</b> An Intermediate-Mid level performance is above the required level</p> <p><b>COMPREHENSIBILITY</b> ALMOST ALWAYS COMPREHENSIBLE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation, vocabulary, and rare lapses into non-target language do not interfere with comprehension for a sympathetic reader</li> </ul> <p><b>TASK FULFILLMENT</b> TASK DEMANDS SURPASSED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• response elaborates beyond task requirements as specified in <b>bold</b> on the test</li> <li>• amount of writing is greater than needed to meet task requirements</li> </ul>	<p><b>Intermediate-Mid</b> An Intermediate-Mid level performance is above the required level</p> <p><b>COMPREHENSIBILITY</b> ALMOST ALWAYS COMPREHENSIBLE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation, vocabulary, and rare lapses into non-target language do not interfere with comprehension for a sympathetic reader</li> </ul> <p><b>TASK FULFILLMENT</b> TASK DEMANDS SURPASSED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• response elaborates beyond task requirements as specified in <b>bold</b> on the test</li> <li>• amount of writing is greater than needed to meet task requirements</li> </ul>

<p><b>NH</b> <b>Novice-High</b> VOCABULARY</p> <p>DOES NOT DEMONSTRATE ADEQUATE SCOPE FOR TASK</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• does not show ability with target language in relation to the topic</li> <li>• inability to go beyond memorized phrases</li> <li>• word choices are repetitive</li> </ul>	<p><b>Intermediate-Low</b> VOCABULARY</p> <p>DEMONSTRATES ADEQUATE SCOPE FOR TASK</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sufficiently broad vocabulary to attempt to create with target language in relation to the topic</li> <li>• ability to go beyond memorized phrases</li> <li>• word choices are minimally repetitive</li> </ul>	<p><b>Intermediate-Mid</b> VOCABULARY</p> <p>DEMONSTRATES GREATER SCOPE THAN REQUIRED FOR TASK</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• breadth of vocabulary goes beyond task requirements; writer creates with target language</li> <li>• goes beyond memorized requirements</li> <li>• word choices are minimally repetitive</li> </ul>	<p><b>+ IM</b></p>
<p>BELOW SENTENCE-LEVEL PRODUCTION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• does not sustain basic sentence-level production beyond a few memorized patterns; resorts to list and fragments</li> <li>• can use present tense of some common verbs; sometimes uses infinitives for conjugated verbs</li> </ul>	<p>SENTENCE-LEVEL PRODUCTION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• overall, sample shows ability to write basic sentence-level discourse (S-V-C)</li> <li>• can express present and future time (with compound future or adverbs of time); generally cannot use past tenses.</li> <li>• sentence patterns are minimally repetitive</li> </ul>	<p>SENTENCE + LEVEL PRODUCTION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• shows ability to go beyond basic sentence structure, with attempts to link sentences</li> <li>• can use: 1) present tense of most regular and some common irregular verbs; 2) the compound future; 3) sporadically the <i>passé composé</i> of high-frequency verbs</li> <li>• emerging ability to vary stylistic features</li> </ul>	



UNRATABLE SAMPLE  
NOT ENOUGH TO EVALUATE; 5 SIMPLE SENTENCES OR LESS

# POSITIONAL PEDAGOGIES AND UNDERSTANDING THE OTHER: EPISTEMOLOGICAL RESEARCH, SUBJECTIVE THEORIES, NARRATIVES, AND THE LANGUAGE PROGRAM DIRECTOR IN A “WEB OF RELATIONSHIPS”<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

In a search for a more satisfying general approach to what those of us teaching and directing programs for the learning of another language and culture do every day, we have found the beginnings of a new epistemological home in positional pedagogies, where knowledge and its sharing can be seen in a context “. . . in which people are defined not in terms of fixed identities, but by their location within shifting networks of relationships, which can be analyzed and changed” (Maher and Tetreault 1994, p. 164). This kind of positionality, “perhaps more than any other single factor, influences the construction of knowledge, and positional factors reflect relationships of power both within and outside the [language and culture] classroom itself” (p. 22). Part of the increasing complexity of this kind of approach to research and pedagogy is a realization that there is still a real need for the “complex interplay between the individual, the group, the teacher, the academic discipline, and the institutional context” (p. 91). This calls for a strong connection between the



“languages of experience and theory” (p. 91). There is little that more accurately describes the research, teaching, and service roles of the Language Program Director (LPD) than the daily need to find and reinforce connections between the languages of experience and theory.

The following studies will demonstrate how the ideas and research paradigms related to our foci—subjective and standpoint theories, narratives as vehicles of theory-building, and positionality and positional pedagogies as a way to interpret approaches to second language and culture acquisition and teaching (SLACAT) and program direction—can and have led to a coordination and ultimate synthesis of perspectives, where the self and other perspectives are explicitly compared and contrasted. First we will present concrete examples of research approaches, data collection, and some data analysis. Then we will proceed with thoughts on the negotiation of perspectives with the goal of syntheses that imply and make explicit a new creation and construction of knowledge about the content, context, and outcomes of research possibilities and mandates for the LPD. This set of strategies is meant to exemplify in concrete and research-oriented terms ways in which “understanding is created in a community of discourse, not in the minds of competing individuals with differing levels of expertise. Because the sources of knowledge are recognized as multiple, authority is redefined as well” (Maher and Tetreault 1994, p. 155). This approach will in turn show that, although individual voices and subjective theories and narratives are the definitional points of departure for suggested research paradigms for the LPD, we advocate not only “. . . personal solutions, but rather a need to examine the university’s deepest cultural and epistemological assumptions concerning the origins and goals of knowledge” (p. 130). The resulting data analyses and conclusions, then, will illustrate how this type of epistemological inquiry is essential as a partial paradigm for the teaching, service, and research work of the LPD.

This contribution focuses on program direction for language and culture teaching and learning as a pedagogy of social practice. As such, ways of conceptualizing language and culture research and teaching from the perspectives of all participants in the process will be introduced to show how links can be made from the production of knowledge (i.e., from ways of knowing and the acts of learning and teaching) to content rooted in the narratives, histories, experiences, and meanings of Others within the culture, language program, and the classroom. Rather than excluding voices from discourse communities, this approach will attempt to show ways to

theorize and to develop a “dialogic emergence of culture” (Tedlock and Mannheim 1995) from the varying perspectives of all those involved in language programs at the university level.

Subjective and standpoint theories give us a theoretical basis to go beyond the mere inclusion or “adding on” of Others’ works and lives in the analysis and understanding of second language and culture to actually beginning from Others’ lives, that is, from their narratives and from their experiences, in order to generate research and pedagogical approaches. This view of subjective and standpoint theories is then put into practice and informed by positional pedagogy, both from the perspective of an LPD who is a teacher and model for the graduate teaching assistants (TAs) as well as from the perspectives of those engaged directly in the second language and culture acquisition and teaching (SLACAT) context.

Before continuing this discussion, we find it important to include some notes on basic aspects of our own positionalities. As a native German, I (Meerholz-Haerle)<sup>2</sup> received my education both in the US and Germany. For six years I was a TA in the German Studies Department described below. During this time, I also had the opportunity of working as an assistant coordinator with the TAs in the department. I (Wildner-Bassett) also received my education in both the US and Germany. At the time of the studies reported here, I had been the LPD for ten years in the same department as my participants. The two of us have worked collaboratively on several projects. The two facets of our research discussed here were undertaken independently by each of us, but we consulted on many aspects of each project as they were in progress.

## **Subjective Theories and Narratives— Definitional Work**

Subjective theories are experientially based knowledge structures which exist in an individualized context of meaning. This context of meaning is in relation to a particular area of life or of experience, and it serves as an explanatory and orientational system for the individual. Subjective theories thus have psychological reality, even though the context of meaning, i.e., any particular subjective theory, is not necessarily explicit or conscious. An example would be the beliefs held by learners and teachers about language and about learning and teaching. Subjective theories are characterized as “complex cognitive structures that are highly individual,

relatively stable, and relatively enduring, and that fulfill the task of explaining and predicting such human phenomena as action, reaction, thinking, emotion, and perception” (Grotjahn 1991, p. 188). As Grotjahn goes on to clarify (pp. 189–90), research founded on subjective theories is related to:

- research on individual differences in SLA;
- ethnography;
- schemata in the information processing engaged in by teachers and learners;
- descriptive and explanatory goals of many forms of research;
- introspective data collection; and
- research on learners’ strategies and learning styles.

It is indeed through research on this last point that we have found our way to both subjective theories as a research paradigm, and to positional pedagogies as a paradigm for becoming more like balanced bilinguals in the languages of experience and theory. As Grotjahn points out, subjective theories create a view of the goals of our research as one that will establish an epistemological model of the individuals involved in SLACAT. This model will explicate the web of relationships and positionalities which pervades the work and research of the LPD.

In recent years, a growing number of studies in teacher education and teacher development have focused on narratives told by teachers for the purposes of investigating their beliefs and knowledge about their teaching practice (e.g., Butt, Townsend, and Raymond 1990; Carter 1993; Connelly and Clandinin 1990). Teachers acquire much of their expertise in and their understandings of their practice in actual classroom situations. As Carter explains, for teachers, “the acquisition of expertise is, in essence, the acquisition of event-structured knowledge” (1993, p. 7). Studying narratives is an appropriate avenue for capturing and disseminating this event-structured knowledge, since narratives are centered around events and their sequencing. As Clandinin and Connelly state, “humans are storytelling organisms, who, individually and socially, lead storied lives. The study of narrative, therefore, is the study of the ways humans experience the world” (1992, p. 2). Bruner further explains that:

*... we organize our experience and our memory of human happenings mainly in the form of narrative—stories, excuses, myths, reasons*

*for doing and not doing, and so on. Narrative is a conventional form, transmitted culturally and constrained by each individual's level of mastery and by his [sic] conglomerate of prosthetic devices, colleagues, and mentors. (1991, p. 4)*

For the LPD, narratives can function as an important source of insight into the culture(s) of teaching and learning co-constructed among the members of a language program. Understanding teachers' subjective theories about their classrooms and their teaching practice is essential to devising effective teacher development programs. If innovations within a program are envisioned, it is also essential to understand a program's underlying structures of beliefs and assumptions in order to devise appropriate strategies for implementing change. Teachers' narratives as a valuable source of data should by no means be underestimated. As White (1991, p. 226) has pointed out, when teachers share stories about their classroom experiences, they are reflecting on their own practice, putting their premises about teaching and their theoretical and practical priorities into a discussion forum, and they are implicitly encouraging others to do the same.

Although numerous recent studies have focused on teacher knowledge and beliefs, there are still many avenues which remain unexplored and which can provide a valuable site of exploration for the LPD as researcher and practitioner. Of the recent studies in the area, most have been conducted with preservice, beginning, and experienced school teachers (e.g., Carter 1994; Connelly and Clandinin 1990; Cortazzi 1991; Knowles and Reynolds 1991; Nias 1989; Pinnegar 1988; White 1991; Yaxley 1991). There are only a few studies which focus on the beliefs and knowledge of educators in a language teaching context (e.g., Freeman 1991, 1993; Kinginger 1997). Further research into this area is certainly warranted. We thus came to the point of developing our research projects from background theoretical work on narratives and on teacher knowledge and beliefs as aspects of subjective and standpoint theories.

## **Research Paradigms**

There have been two general approaches, often viewed as being diametrically opposed, to research in SLACAT. Magnan points out that these two approaches or paradigms are seen as:

*. . . facts vs. values, objectivity vs. subjectivity, fixed categories vs. emergent categories, static reality vs. fluid reality, outsider's perspective vs. insider's perspective, causal explanation vs. understanding. (1996, p. 3)*

As an alternative to this diametric opposition, Magnan illustrates how “. . . the researcher's search for a position of understanding in the text [the focus of the research questions; the topic and content of the research]” comes as a result of the “interaction of researcher and subjects. . . . [I]t becomes almost dialogic, as polyphonic voices interact with each other, shaping meaning and interpretation” (p. 11).

The two research projects described below are both qualitative case studies. This approach is particularly suitable for fostering the interaction between researchers and subject matter. As Denzin and Lincoln explain:

*. . . qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape the inquiry. They seek answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning. (1994, p. 4)*

Similarly, Johnson (1993, p. 7) advises that case studies be not neglected as an important research tool in the area of SLACAT because they help focus on individuals and small groups and lead to insights that include particular contexts and their complexities.

There are various ways to ensure the methodological rigor of qualitative studies. Johnson (1993) suggests, for instance, including a sufficiently large amount of data in order to gain a distinct understanding of typical and atypical occurrences. A clear description of the procedures used for data analysis is, of course, essential. Researchers can also verify their interpretation of the data by conducting a “member check” (Janesick 1994, p. 216). That is, they can ask participants in the project or members of the culture(s) studied to cross-check the interpretation of the findings, thus admitting polyphonic voices and multiple perspectives into the interpretive process. Janesick (1994) further points out that in qualitative research, validity is closely connected to credibility. It is crucial that interpretations and conclusions be substantiated by the data. Sufficient examples should therefore be included in the presentations of findings in order to enable readers to be co-judges of a study's validity.

Of course researchers also have to be conscious of their own backgrounds and training, and realize how their own positionalities shape any data interpretation. As Stake explains, even if a strong attempt is made to present a case and let it speak for itself, “it may be the case’s own story [that is presented], but it is the researcher’s dressing of the story” (1994, p. 240). It is therefore important for researchers to explicitly and consistently position themselves in relation to their work.

## **Objectivity in Second Language and Culture Acquisition and Teaching Research**

This call for explicitly stating our research questions, collecting our data, and interpreting our findings in a way which is not a claim to be unmarked or generically human may itself call up for many the question of objectivity. Harding in fact points out that:

*The most radical implication of understanding how the structure of the institutions of science structures the content of the science produced there . . . may be the recognition that whoever gets to define what counts as a scientific problem also gets a powerful role in shaping the picture of the world that results from scientific research. (1991, p. 40)*

She goes on to clarify that it is helpful to see the issue by noticing that “though scientific methods are selected . . . exactly in order to eliminate all social values from inquiry, they are actually operationalized to eliminate only those values that differ within whatever gets to count as the community of scientists” (p. 41).

Thus, many of the conclusions that have been drawn about SLACAT and the pedagogical implications often derived from those conclusions, may fit the experiences of only a small portion of the people whom these conclusions and implications will ultimately affect. Most of us will be able to agree that language acquisition and teaching are social phenomena which are bound to particular institutions (like schools or universities) and to particular political systems. These social phenomena are themselves defined by explicit and, even more, by implicit social and political norms (see also Grotjahn 1993, p. 237). These norms are in turn, most often related to the dominant conceptual schemata of some but not all of those involved in the daily work of institutions. There is indeed an implicit

“standpoint” in what we most often consider to be our most unbiased and objective approaches and standards for inquiry and implementation in language and culture teaching and in program administration. The call we are making here echoes, then, Harding’s call for “strong objectivity,” i.e., “the acknowledgment that all human beliefs—including our best scientific beliefs—are socially situated, but they also require a critical evaluation to determine which social situations tend to generate the most objective knowledge claims” (1991, p. 142). One final summary from Harding’s definitional work can help us understand the application of these thoughts about standpoint theory and strong objectivity to issues of SLACAT and program administration:

*To enact or operationalize the directive of strong objectivity is to value the Other’s perspective and to pass over in thought into the social condition that creates it—not in order to stay there, to “go native” or merge the self with the Other, but in order to look back at the self in all its cultural particularity from a more distant, critical, objectifying location. (1991, p. 151)*

## **Data Types and Sources: Our Subjective Research Paradigms**

We have chosen multiple and very diverse contexts within which to view the subjective theories and narratives of those involved in SLACAT. Our data is in the form of:

- videotaped records of meetings among teachers, coordinators, and supervisors for the purposes of language program direction;
- interviews with participants in those meetings;
- transcripts and analyses of the meetings and interviews;
- self-reflective journals of TAs;
- written autobiographies by TAs focused on explicating positionalities and standpoints;
- written dialogues which were interactive and collaborative explications of positionalities and standpoints; and
- critical reflections and process evaluations by the authors of the written dialogues and autobiographies on the gradual emergence

of statements concerning the shifting networks of relationships in institutional and personal contexts.

We have analyzed this array of data using various methodologies which help us understand how the interaction of experience and theory can be “. . . narrated and understood in terms of different language and descriptive lenses” (Maher and Tetreault 1994, p. 204). The different language and different descriptive lenses each of us have used will become apparent in the discussion, but we will also show how the many types of data and their analyses can be viewed as “polyphonic voices” that “interact with each other, shaping meaning and interpretation” (Magnan 1996).

Most of the recent studies on teacher narratives build on narrative data elicited by the investigator for research purposes. Various studies, for example, employ data gathered through interviews (e.g., Cortazzi 1991; Nias 1989; Pinnegar 1988), journal entries (e.g., Carter 1994), questionnaires (e.g., Nelson 1993), or teacher autobiographies (Goodson 1980; Knowles 1992). Some researchers have engaged participating teachers in a dialogic process. They have focused on the written correspondence between researchers and participants (see Clandinin and Connelly 1990) or on collaboratively constructed autobiographies (Butt, Raymond, and Yamagishi 1988; Butt, Townsend, and Raymond 1990) as a source of data. The latter approach asks participants to write and concurrently discuss their autobiographies with other participants, constantly revising their writings based on issues raised during the discussions.

There is a scarcity of studies using naturalistically occurring data for research into teachers' understandings of their practice. One of the few studies in this area was conducted by Gudmundsdottir (1991) who observed two social sciences teachers in their classrooms and analyzed the stories they told while teaching. In his large-scale study on primary teachers in Great Britain, Cortazzi (1991) includes some narratives told in a naturalistic context. He does not, however, present a detailed analysis of this part of his data. Bennett (1983) taped six lunch-time gatherings of college teachers. Her interest, however, is only directed toward the structural properties of certain narratives told in this setting. Hammersley (1984), Kainan (1994), and Pollard (1987) investigated teachers' staff room talk to gain insights into teachers' perspectives on their work. They categorize the teachers' concerns and describe the main functions of teacher-teacher talk in the classroom, but they do not conduct an actual analysis of the teachers' discourse.



This brief review of studies on teacher narratives and teacher understandings of their practice points to a need for studies which focus on language teachers interacting in their everyday naturalistic environment. Observing and analyzing narrative tellings in their naturalistic context will more adequately capture the emergent nature of teachers' culture(s). Focusing on narrative co-construction will provide insights into the subjective theories and assumptions that teachers posit, challenge, and maintain about their students, about themselves as teachers, and about their teaching practice.

As Jacoby and Ochs claim, "co-construction is *the joint creation of a form, stance, action, activity, identity, institution, skill, ideology, emotion, or other culturally meaningful reality*" (1995, p. 171; emphasis in the original). Participants in co-narration co-construct perspectives on and assumptions about the world around them. In the narrative process, they actually build theories of events, and challenge and redraft these theories collaboratively. This process of theory construction is traditionally associated more with environments such as laboratories or university seminars. Ochs and her colleagues (e.g. Ochs, Smith, and Taylor 1989; Ochs and Taylor 1992; Ochs et al. 1992) argue that this is a misconception, and that essentially the same process of positing, challenging, and redrafting theories takes place in such everyday gatherings as family dinners. The activity of constructing a narrative, they claim, is conducive to theory construction in all these environments.

We maintain here that the same process of theory-building which can be observed around family tables, in science laboratories, or in seminars can also be observed during professional meetings of TAs in a language program. In all cases, observations are made and theories are built based on these observations. In one of the meetings analyzed here, for instance, a TA told a story describing a student's destructive behavior during group work. Her criticism of this student led the group to a discussion on appropriate vs. inappropriate student conduct, or in other words, to co-construct a theory regarding the issue.

Theories, whether developed in a laboratory, around a dinner table, or in a meeting, are *potential* explanations of events and as such are challengeable (Ochs et al. 1992). They are merely versions of reality. Investigating which versions or which voices are heard more and which tend to be silenced will provide valuable insights not only into the dynamics of meetings, but also into the differential access to the construction of knowledge within a community.

## Issues of Power and a Research Mandate for the Language Program Director

We will continue the discussion here by showing our intent to start from a footing within the approaches to research in SLACAT discussed above. There is a very close and direct connection between the ideas expressed in subjective and standpoint theories and the discoveries and warnings that have come to the study of SLACAT through the work of sociolinguists who have looked at language and gender. Those scholars have often reiterated that the forms and uses of language in many of our societies “designate men as the ‘unmarked’ and women as the ‘marked’ [or unusual, misfit, or exceptional] category” (Freeman and McElhinny 1996, p. 223). Freeman and McElhinny describe a dynamic process where “patterns of meaning or commonsense assumptions that guide people’s behavior within a particular society” are created. These “cultural values and belief systems are closely linked to power” (p. 220). As Susan Gal puts it: “. . . the strongest form of power may well be the ability to define social reality, to impose visions of the world. Such visions are inscribed in language and, most importantly, enacted in interaction” (1992, p. 160).

Narratives and both subjective and standpoint theories thus help us become aware that in our research in SLACAT there are ways to take this “strongest form of power” into our own researchers’ hands by clearly choosing and explicitly stating the standpoint from which we ask our research questions, collect our data, and interpret our findings. We as LPDs and researchers are also, then, able to both choose and to explicitly state our subjective theories and our standpoints in a particular interaction or in our interpretation of a particular narrative. New insights are necessary to accomplish these new analyses and to explicate subjective and standpoint theories and the power situations which grant anyone even a transitory ability to define social reality or impose a vision on a language program. These insights can be gained by an in-depth look at TAs’ and LPDs’ narratives, at their own expository and dialogic statements about their subjective and standpoint theories, and at the linguistic processes which point to salient events in those narrative and dialogic accounts.

Sociolinguistics and general linguistic analysis can help us understand this type of approach to research and interpretation as applied to the contexts of research for the LPD. Those fields have given us both definitions and research on *agency* in language. While there have been relatively few research studies published on “how agency is linguistically realized in

discursive practices,” we know from Freeman and McElhinny’s summary work that:

*... an agentive individual [is] ... one who speaks for himself or herself, accepts responsibilities for his or her thoughts, speech, and actions, and is recognizable separate from any particular collective. ... [A]gency ... is contingent upon discursive practices made available to the individual, and not automatically attributed to all human beings in the way that more traditional sociological theory assumes. (1996, p. 229)*

This harks directly back to what the standpoint theorists have said about the interaction of power, the dominant group, and a myth of typical human interaction in society. Thus LPDs and researchers of second language and culture acquisition and teaching need an analysis of language and culture to be based on a consciousness as set forth in subjective and standpoint theories. This consciousness needs then to be put into practice and informed by positional pedagogy. By making explicit and working with our own narratives and subjective theories which give us the perspective for starting from and declaring our “standpoint,” that is, by explicitly stating our research questions, collecting our data, and interpreting our findings from a particular standpoint which does *not* claim to be unmarked or generically human, we will be able to use these findings and to teach (about) them in such a way as to make agency in the L2/C2 a viable possibility for all participants. We will also be able to view our work as LPDs as a way of making explicit our own and our TAs’ subjective and standpoint theories about teaching and about program direction, and to move from theory to practice, which will then spiral to inform a new level of theory about language program direction and about research in SLACAT.

## **A Synthesis of Perspectives**

Linguistic and cultural Otherness cannot be separated from any other form of Otherness. A synthesis of perspectives means that TAs and LPDs engage in a negotiation of perspectives, of their own and others’ narratives, and of both subjective and standpoint theories when TAs and LPDs come into contact with Otherness in any form, be it the “other language,” the “other culture,” or “other” individuals (Schinschke 1995). This can proceed by:

- first an explicit definition of the perspectives of self and other;
- then a coordination of perspectives, where the self and other perspectives are explicitly compared and contrasted;
- followed by a negotiation of perspective with the goal of synthesis that implies, and if possible explicitly thematizes, creation and construction of new knowledge; and
- finally a construction and creation of new subjective theories relating to the newly negotiated knowledge and synthesis of perspectives.

### **A Case Study: Narratives, TAs, and the LPD**

To investigate the co-construction of theories in the context of a language program, I (Meerholz-Haerle) video and audio taped the weekly meetings of four TA groups in a German Studies department over the course of the semester. The study addresses the following research questions:

- What functions do the narratives told by TAs serve in the meetings, i.e., why are they told?
- What themes are addressed, i.e., what are the TAs' preoccupations?
- What subjective theories do TAs co-construct about their own rights and responsibilities, as well as about their students' rights and responsibilities?
- What subjective theories are ratified as group theories, and who is involved in the process of ratification?

### **Methodology and Context**

Fifteen TAs and one supervising faculty member participated in the study. The TAs were divided, in connection to their teaching duties, into four groups of two, three, four, and six participants respectively. They were teaching beginning and intermediate language courses (first- through fourth-semester German). All meetings were moderated by the coordinator (faculty member) who, in the two larger groups, worked together with an assistant coordinator (TA). The general format of the meetings was that of a roundtable discussion. The meetings were held in the department's seminar room (25'x12').

At the time of the taping, I had been part of the department's culture for six years and had attended previous meetings with most of the TAs. All of them had known me for at least one semester and, presumably, did not perceive my presence as an intrusion. Over the entire period of my data collection, only three overt references were made to the presence of the tape recorder and the fact that the meetings were being taped. Applying Adler and Adler's refined categorization of participant observers, I acted as a "peripheral-member-researcher" who "observe[d] and interact[ed] closely enough with members to establish an insider's identity without participating in those activities constituting the core of group membership" (1994, p. 380).

The twenty-five meetings which were taped over the course of the semester yielded a total of twenty hours and fifty-six minutes of data. The meetings were transcribed in their entirety from the tape recording. In a second phase, non-verbal features were added to the notations based on the video recordings. Additional data was gathered from semi-structured interviews with all participants. The interviews were aimed at yielding general ethnographic information concerning all participants, as well as gaining explicitly formulated statements regarding their views on teacher and student roles, the purposes of coordination meetings, and the role of the coordinator.

My analytic approach is "inductive" (Janesick 1994, p. 215) in the sense that questions, categories, and themes were not superimposed on the data, but were allowed to emerge from it. A first step in the analysis was to identify the narratives which were told during the meetings. Initiators, main tellers, and protagonists were identified for each narrative and tabulated with respect to gender and status (TA/coordinator/student in language class). The number of co-participants in the individual tellings was also calculated.

Narratives were further classified according to the themes emerging from them. In order to avoid a too narrow classification, several themes could be assigned to one narrative. Most of the narratives in this corpus focus around grading and teaching issues, but others also thematize classroom management, professional conduct, and teaching tasks (i.e., problematizing teaching materials or lesson content). It is interesting to note that the TAs' preoccupation with grading and testing issues was less pronounced among the more experienced TAs studied. The TAs teaching in the first-year courses told more narratives aimed at shaping policy decisions. Compared to this, the TAs teaching in the second-year courses, who

were also more experienced, tended to narrate individual problems or unusual occurrences with the intention of either simply sharing their experiences or getting their colleagues' input on certain matters. This might be due to the fact that the German courses in the first year consist of several more components (e.g., a video lab, an oral practice session) than do the follow-up courses. Due to their greater complexity, the first-year courses are more thoroughly structured, leaving less opportunity for individual TAs to "do their own thing." The TAs in these courses spend a lot of time negotiating how to teach and evaluate program components. They accomplish much of this discussion through narratives, relating both what happened and what might happen because of certain group decisions. The TAs teaching in the second-year courses, on the other hand, are allowed more freedom for the creative shaping of their lessons. Less standardization of procedures is required, since their syllabus contains fewer standardized components. This also frees up time during their coordination meetings to discuss difficulties with students or teaching issues.

Telling narratives is an opportunity for the TAs to negotiate their theories and assumptions regarding issues such as student and teacher rights and responsibilities. The following segment presents a partial analysis of a narrative telling which took place in the group teaching second-semester German. The data was transcribed using HIAT, a computer program developed by Ehlich (1994).<sup>3</sup> The transcription conventions used are adapted from Jefferson (Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson 1974, pp. 731–733).<sup>4</sup>

This particular TA group consisted of the eight members as detailed in Table 1:<sup>5</sup>

*Table 1*  
TA Group Demographics

Name	Gender	Native (NS) or Non-Native (NNS) Speaker of German	Age	Years of Teaching Experience
(In)*	female	NS	34	8
(Ju)**	female	NNS	27	5
(Ja)	female	NNS	28	2
(Na)	female	NNS	23	1
(An)	female	NS	24	1
(Ma)	male	NS	23	1
(Ch)	male	NS	23	1
(Ph)	male	NNS	24	1

\*Coordinator (faculty) \*\*Assistant coordinator (TA)

The TAs in the following data sample discuss how to evaluate essays that are turned in late. The students in our language program are generally required to first write a draft of their essays, correcting it based on their peers' as well as their instructor's input. The final draft of the essay is then due three days after the rough draft was turned in. To illustrate how she dealt with a late essay, Nadja tells a story about an incident which happened in her class that day.

|Na[ in my class today, in my class today, one of the student  
331 \_- - - - -

|Na[s that forgot her rough, I mean, her final draft, she ha  
332 \_- - - - -

|Na[d, she said, well, I have a rough draft with me, and I s  
333 \_- - - - -

|Na[ aid, well, can you (.) at least bring your final draft a  
334 \_- - - - -

|Na[ny time soon after the class? no, I won't be able to mak  
335 \_- - - - -

|Na[e it even today, so what if I bring it tomorrow? I said,  
336 \_- - - - -

|Na[ no I don't take anything. So I didn't take the rough dr  
337 \_- - - - -

|Na[ aft, I didn't take the ( ) and she doesn't get a  
|Ch[ oh!  
338 \_- - - - -

|In[ ( ) yeah  
|Na[ ny, any points and if she wanted 25 or wh  
|An[ yeah  
|Ma[ tja, that's tough  
| someone else also talking  
|Ch[ that's tough  
339 \_- - - - -

|Na[ atever points, she should work for it, well, I can't do  
340 \_- - - - -

- INa[ it today  
 IPh[ it's not like she hasn't had two weeks  
 I \_ various:  
 341 \_-----
- ICh[ yeah, but  
 IPh[ or we haven't done this for the last ( )  
 I \_right, mhm various: right, mhm  
 342 \_-----
- IJu[ ok, so what would, what do you decide as a group?  
 343 \_-----

Judging from the various “rights” and “mhms” (e.g., 340–341) in the background, the majority of the TAs in this group seem to approve of Nadja’s handling of the situation. Phil even explicitly voices his support of her actions (340–341). Christian, however, expresses his surprise at Nadja’s guidelines for accepting student essays (338; 342). When he starts to elaborate on his objection (341), he is interrupted by Judith, the assistant coordinator, who requests an explicit stating of the group decision on how to handle late essays. Phil responds that Nadja’s handling of the situation was “precedent setting” and should be adopted by the group. He continues that this late in the semester (eleventh week), the students should be used to the essay writing process employed by the program:

- IPh[ especially b  
 349 \_-----
- ICh[ ( )  
 IPh[ ecause they've had it this semester three times already,  
 350 \_-----
- INa[ right, I mean  
 IPh[ this process, it's not like they don't know the process  
 351 \_-----
- ICh[ well, yeah (.) if somebody tells me, what  
 IPh[  
 I \_ someone: right  
 352 \_-----



IJa[ if it's the same o

ICh[ if they say, this is my final draft?

IPh[ ( )

353 \_ - - - - -

IJa[ ne that you wrote on, they didn't even bother just to re

354 \_ - - - - -

IJa[ type it, not make any changes

ICh[ yeah, what if they say, well that is my final draft

355 \_ - - - - -

IIn[ it isn't

IJa[ it isn't

IJa[ it's not, it's their rough draft

ICh[ what if they s

356 \_ - - - - -

IJa[ what if they say, this is

ICh[ ay, ok, what if they cross out rough draft

357 \_ - - - - -

IJa[ my favorite dog, ok? what if

I \_ *laughter*

ICh[ no, no, this is no

358 \_ - - - - -

IJa[ well, it is

ICh[ t as stupid as you think if they say, it's not, WE d

359 \_ - - - - -

ICh[ on't decide what their final version is, THEY decide wha

360 \_ - - - - -

IJa[ they

ICh[ t their final version is, if they say this is my final v

361 \_ - - - - -

ICh[ ersion, I don't do anything about it, that's what we hav

362 \_ - - - - -

IJa[ no we don't

ICh[ e to accept and that's what we have to grade,

363 \_ - - - - -

|Na[ no we don't  
 364 \_-----

Facing the opposition of his entire group of colleagues, including the coordinators, Christian presents and maintains his theory that it is the students' right to decide which piece of writing is graded as their final draft. Christian is not easily swayed by his colleagues' unanimous opposition (356), but elaborates on a hypothetical case illustrating his grading theory (356–363). His subjective theory stresses the TAs' obligation to respect students' choices. He grants the students more input and power regarding their writing grades than the rest of the TA group. His theory constructs the teachers as reacting to student decisions, instead of establishing grading norms for them.

Nadja ridicules Christian's objection, challenging his theory (357–358). She implies that students might claim anything, but that their statements are of no importance to the matter at hand. The laughter that greets her utterance denotes general agreement and probably alludes to a generally shared assumption that students frequently make irrelevant comments which are best left ignored. The discussion continues with other TAs joining in. They all are in favor of Nadja's handling of the situation. After the assistant coordinator summarizes the group's grading policy, she directly addresses Christian again to ask whether he can "live with this:"

|Ch[ actually, I don't understand really, b-,b-, but, le  
 | \_ *stutters*  
 396 \_-----

|Ch[ t's not discuss eh, anymore, if they have a perfect roug  
 397 \_-----

|Ch[ h draft, they can, they have to write it again, make it,  
 398 \_-----

|Ch[ eh, have a different format and hand it in as the, the  
 399 \_-----

|Ch[ f- eh, because they are not allowed to hand this in as t  
 400 \_-----

|Ch[ he final draft I think, no, I think, you  
 | \_ *someone mumbling, incomprehensible*  
 401 \_-----



IIn[ s off, I said, of course you can rewrite it and get 100

ICh[ yeah

412 \_-----

IIn[ percent, but if you're happy with 95, I'm happy with it,

413 \_-----

IIn[ you know, but they, they ca- yeah, but that's your

I | *someo*

ICh[ yeah, that's my approach, that's my approach

414 \_-----

IIn[ decision, and not

I | *ne mumbling*

ICh[ and that's not my approach, that, I think that

415 \_-----

ICh[ 's their decision, that's not my decision, because I don

416 \_-----

IIn[ no,

IAn[ but you suggest, you

ICh[ 't see why it should be my decision

417 \_-----

IIn[ but you are the teacher, and you are saying we are apply

IAn[ s-

418 \_-----

IIn[ ing the process approach, and if we didn't apply the app

I \_ *someone moans*

ICh[ yea

419 \_-----

IIn[ roach, then, you know then the student is underm

ICh[ h yeah, ok

420 \_-----

IIn[ ining the approach, (.) (you know)

ICh[ so, well, what if (tha

421 \_-----



IIn[ roach, then, you know      then the student is underm  
 |Ch[ h                                yeah, ok  
 420 \_-----

IIn[ ining the approach, (.) (you know)  
 |Ch[                                        so, well, what if (tha  
 421 \_-----

IAn[                                        food  
 |Ch[ t's true?)    ok, no, it's eh, it's fine    let's  
 |                                *laughs*  
 422 \_-----

IIna[    so what we decided is, if there is no rough draft  
 |Ch[ do it that way  
 423 \_-----

The data presented above can help illuminate power relationships co-constructed within a group. It can also be used as a tool for investigating theories that TAs and coordinators hold concerning issues such as grading, testing, student behavior, and so forth. In meetings such as the ones described above, decisions are made and knowledge is co-constructed concerning major components of language programs. Whether the immediate goal is to implement change or to explore the direction of teacher development, it is essential for the LPD to examine and become aware of what constitutes the "professional culture of teachers" (Kainan 1994, p. 157) within a program. The data gathered and analyzed in the process can, of course, also contribute to generating further research questions and projects.

A final observation concerns the interviews conducted with TAs, assistant coordinators, coordinator, and LPD in the department. While TAs and assistant coordinators (advanced TAs) agreed that the meetings were held mainly to discuss exams and problem students, both the LPD and the coordinator (faculty members) also considered the TAs' professional development and their initiation to team work an essential purpose and goal. The LPD also stresses this aspect elsewhere:

*... perhaps one of the most fertile opportunities for development are the weekly, course-specific coordination meetings in which all aspects of teaching as a professional endeavor are "cussed and discussed." (Wildner-Bassett 1992, p. 154)*

The TAs in this program sometimes seemed to experience their coordination meetings as a "waste of time" (Anna). Markus admitted that he gets "frustrated, because there's just some things we talk about that have absolutely no significance." Listening to the different voices present within a program and exploring subjective theories, not only about teaching-related issues, but also about professional expectations, might be beneficial to all members of the department. It seems that an explicit discussion about expectations and frustrations regarding the meetings might have been conducive to improving the working relationships this particular semester. In this way, the TAs, assistant coordinators, coordinator, and LPD would have been better able to co-construct group theories which were negotiated from various subjective theories about professional expectations among all those involved with SLACAT in the department.

### **A Case Study of Epistemological Exploration: A Graduate Course on the "Other"**

A set of course components which realize and operationalize positional pedagogy footed in subjective and standpoint theories can be exemplified in our second case study, involving a graduate course taught in 1997. This case study of epistemological exploration is connected to the above study of narratives, teacher knowledge, and beliefs in that it had a focus on dialogic co-construction as a joint creation of a form, stance, action, activity, identity, institution, skill, ideology, emotion, or other culturally meaningful reality (Jacoby and Ochs 1995, p. 171). The course views gender and culture issues in the German-speaking world as a means to inspire students to think about themselves, others, and social organizations in new ways. The broadest form of these issues include difference, otherness, and outsidership. The exploration begins by examining manifestations of these issues in the German-speaking world. The idea is to learn to practice a kind of "disloyalty" to conventional home culture and personal culture assumptions, as well to create a dialogue among individuals where they can collaboratively create their own emerging disloyalties.

The main **Educational Goals** of the course were to:

- learn about some of the elements of our own and other societies which are related to the multifaceted influences of gender, race, class, and various definitions of Otherness;
- become aware of the many ways of knowing and the assumptions about interpreting events and beliefs which shape any society and the individuals living in it;
- learn to use new awareness to compare and contrast various cultures and events in terms of the connotations and underlying implications that are different for each individual;
- gain an understanding of the sociological and anthropological notion of the stranger or outsider (*der/die Fremde*);
- learn to take the patterns women/Others in German-speaking societies create and the meanings they invent as a case study, and to learn from these patterns;
- have practical tools available to reconceptualize intercultural learning by placing a focus on *process* and on a subjective, experience-related understanding of the societies and cultures students come in contact with;
- enhance and find new tools for developing learner autonomy and critical thinking.

There were many opportunities for all of us participating in the course to explore and revise our positionalities in relation to many varied topics. Much of the evidence for and outcomes of these opportunities will be reflected in the data to be explored below. In addition to the expected and very productive classroom discussions, which will be excluded from the analysis due to a lack of objective recordings, there are three main data pools which will be investigated in order to reveal how the process of achieving an increased awareness of positionality, difference, and the possibilities for making connections across forms of difference once these differences were acknowledged became central to the mutual construction of knowledge in the classroom (Maher and Tetreault 1994, p. 251). This making of connections across forms of difference continued in the teaching and program direction aspects of all of our work. The classroom participants, their assignments, and especially process evaluations and an



analysis of the results of their assignments will be described in some detail below. It should be noted that the students in the class were all, with one exception, TAs in the program where the researcher (Wildner-Bassett) was the LPD. This interaction of voices and positionalities and the thematization of this interaction as a central content of the course and of the process evaluations and data analyses are what make the course an example of positional pedagogy founded in subjective and standpoint theories.

From the perspective of the LPD in a program where the students in this graduate-level course were taught by the LPD, I was also able to see and operationalize goals in addition to the educational ones listed above, namely:

- to get a subjective view of the TAs' ways of knowing, and relate this to possibilities for their ways of teaching;
- to explore and make conscious my own subjective theories about Others in all aspects of SLACAT, but especially in those aspects thematized in the course work;
- to find new ways of positioning myself in a pedagogical context where polyphonic voices and perspectives are in a steady process of redefinition;
- to begin to look at my own and the other participants' perspectives from a stance of Harding's (1991) strong objectivity; and
- to learn to look at my own and each of our Selves from a critical location made possible by the process of revisions of positionality and epistemological research.

In many ways, this course was itself an endeavor of epistemological research about positional pedagogy, ways of knowing, ways of teaching, and ways of learning, that was in process throughout the semester and that is still in process as I work with the data and reflect on my own roles as participant, instructor, and LPD.

### **Class Participants and Framework**

The participants in this graduate-level course were four female and three male graduate students, all enrolled in the M.A. program in German Studies at our institution. Their ages ranged from 23 to 44 years of age. The birth cultures of four of the students were in various parts of Germany, including the former East, and of the other three were various parts

of the United States. Ethnicity in most general terms (Caucasian) was the only obvious trait where there was homogeneity in the group. The seminar, given in Spring 1997, was conducted in German, but students were allowed to choose the language in which they were most comfortable writing for a portion of the assignments. The data collected and analyzed in part below were related to the collaboratively constructed autobiographies as suggested in Butt, Raymond, and Yamagishi (1988) and Butt, Townsend, and Raymond (1990). Participants in this course were asked to write and concurrently discuss their autobiographies with other participants, revising their writings based on issues raised during the discussions. For several of the out-of-class activities related to collaborative construction, the seminar participants were asked to find a partner who could somehow be defined as Other, i.e., of other gender, background culture, family background, sexual, or other preferences, etc. These partners then worked together in construction of the “Intercultural Learning Portfolio.” The portfolio contained, for each participant:

- three progressive versions of the Standpoint Autobiography;
- reactions to each version by the partner/Other;
- twelve entries in a partner journal (a dialogic written exchange which could only exist if collaborative co-construction took place); and
- critical assessments of the dialogic emergence of standpoint and cultural exchange, written by each participant individually. These latter entries gave the students an opportunity to take a step back to evaluate the process of their diadic discourse and to find a way to express their assessment of the process and of the collaborative products.

The best way to give our readers an impression of the voices and contents which the participants developed in their work with their Standpoint Autobiographies is to let their voices be “heard” here.

### **Standpoint Autobiographies**

The students were asked to write three progressive versions of what we called their “Standpoint Autobiography.” This was not intended, nor written, as an obvious “story of my life.” The objective of this process-oriented assignment was, instead, to have students see and construct

themselves as learning and knowing subjects who bring into their own focus and consciousness, thematize, and develop an awareness and a way of expressing their own attitudes, positionalities, and perspectives on who they are in terms of Self, and who they see or react to as Other (Quasthoff 1993; Rao 1993). The possibilities and goals of Self and Other understanding are viewed through a problem-posing lens, where interactive participation and critical inquiry help to extend the ideas from the curriculum to the students' own lives (Wink 1997, p. 48). The implied goal of this process is also a gradual movement toward the perspective of the Other in any particular constellation of Self and Other, and then a possibility for a synthesis of perspectives. By means of presenting chosen aspects of Self for the assumed audience of an Other, the students gained insights and felt challenges in terms of coherence, consistency, and voicing key components of their standpoint and positionality in less ambiguous ways. The following are quotes from selected Standpoint Autobiographies of class members.<sup>6</sup>

*TH: Since I have already spent 24 years on this earth, one could assume that I have developed as a person enough so that a definition of my own individuality could be seen as simple. First I see myself as a man who has grown up during a time in which many drastic changes in society are occurring. As a man a person is still in the position which brings the criticisms of the past and the present [with it]. . . . it is definitely important for me to mention that I anticipate an exchange of roles in the future, in which a Caucasian man will experience the negative aspects of [being] a minority. . . . it needs to be thought out how such an abrupt change in social-political terms might also bring its own problems in other aspects.*

*OG: . . . Even the task of thinking about who I am makes my head hurt. Anyway, E, I am going to try for both our sakes to make this insightful, but more importantly truthful. . . . from age 11, I was happy again. I had lots of friends, lived on a farm, and had a new step-dad, who I loved dearly. About this time, I realized that I was gay. I guess it wasn't an overnight type of thing, but I knew I was different than most of the other boys my age. I still had friends, played little-league football, and pretended to have girlfriends, but slowly became introverted and nerdy. I knew that gay people existed, but I also knew it was "bad" to be gay. . . . I knew I couldn't possible live*

*in a small-town [sic] for the rest of my life. I graduated first in my high school (as do many gay men) and took (of all things) a full Air Force scholarship. . . . My two older brothers took me out for my 21st birthday. . . . [T]hey took me from one strip bar to another. Not only was I a closeted gay man and totally uninterested in what these women were doing, but I had also been volunteering in a shelter for abused women and children and had become quite a feminist. I can sort of look back on that night and chuckle, sort of. Anyway, after that night, I decided to never be ashamed of who I am. . . . I am gay just like I have brown hair and green eyes. Nature put it there. . . .*

*AS: I want to ask myself the question of how I see myself and others culturally. . . . I was born into a blue-collar family, went through [minimal schooling], and then I worked many different jobs. I couldn't get any further [vocational training], this situation didn't allow it. I wasn't allowed to go to any further schooling, my mother didn't see the need for that. She had the standpoint, if you're born into a blue-collar family, you don't need to break out of the caste. . . . If I met people who had gone to the Gymnasium (college preparatory school), I couldn't keep up, we spoke a different language, had very different lives. . . . We learned as children to protect ourselves on the street, we learned to make the best of our situation. Parents, if one had any, were not able to show their children something different, except how to survive as well as possible. . . . Tolerance was not very important, we couldn't afford [tolerance], especially since I grew up as a girl without guidance. . . . We immediately had a bad reputation if we were seen with foreigners. [I moved to Spain.] On my first birthday in Spain (23 years old) I was surrounded by foreigners, and I was one myself. I felt great, the best I had felt in my life. We weren't foreigners, we were people. It didn't matter who had what, how much someone had, who did what. Important was only that we were friends and that we understood each other.*

As these honest and very different first drafts of the Standpoint Autobiographies show us, there are many individual, role, and social-political differences among the voices in the dialogues. The depth and breadth of topics chosen by the participants, and of the voices they found to express their investment in these topics, also led these participants as TAs in their

own classrooms to become aware of the depth and breadth of difference and identity that their students were also most likely feeling and leaving unvoiced. The participants in this graduate class must also be acknowledged as exceptional in their eloquence and willingness to engage in this type of dialogic emergence of postitionality.

### Reactions and Responses by Others

An integral part of the co-construction of the Standpoint Autobiographies was the reactions and responses of the partners in the diad. It became obvious, as the semester developed, that the participants were all equally engaged in the process, and that they saw the events taking place within the framework of the class and its projects as important beyond the usual seminar. Some student comments which support this point follow:<sup>7</sup>

*VA : I am happy and thankful to have found a forum in the framework of this course where I can work out and discover my cultural standpoint and based on that to understand foreign (Other) cultures better. . . . Because of this it is difficult for me to refrain from personal reflections, but because of this it is the analysis of my own Standpoint that will lead to a general understanding of the theme of the course. . . . I think that the institution of the university is a very fitting place (or should be) to give us a venue and a frame for work on our own standpoint autobiographies. The "education of the mind" which is the traditional view within the university shouldn't be restricted to the consuming of texts, but should also include critical reflection about their contents. This is only possible if a person is conscious of her own standpoint, from which we reflect. . . . You see, I don't want to limit the "Other" to distanced localities or an exotic culture, but rather that I understand "Otherness" as a concept that extends to the personal and to the abstract."*

*FS: The fact that VA's Standpoint Autobiography is so understandable for me is because this whole event takes place within the framework of a general exchange and in the framework of the seminar [where] a very good way and means of expressing ourselves has developed. That which she has written connects to what she says in the seminar, her standpoint is clear. . . . In this way, she makes it possible for me to differentiate what she says from what she writes[, and then] I can understand them differently and better.*

As the excerpts show, then, the participants became well aware of the difficulties, but also of the necessity and the ultimate rewards, of consciously building a discourse community that was different from the norm for them personally and for me as the instructor and as the LPD for this group of people. We all gradually became increasingly invested in a growing ability to engage in positional pedagogies on all levels available to us. This engagement helped us to “. . . understand that an awareness of positionality, difference, and the possibility of making connections across forms of difference once they are acknowledged is central to the construction of knowledge” (Maher and Tetreault 1994, p. 251).

### Partner Journals

A second kind of discussion took place, where participants co-constructed “Partner Journals.” Here students wrote to each other on themes related to the course topics which were also of personal importance to the diad. Diads were self-defined. Students used either paper-and-pen (or word-processed) entries in a written form of dialogue with another member of the class who the students had (self-) identified as somehow “Other.” This self-declaration of “Other”ness could focus on differences in gender, culture, ethnicity, age, or preferences (sexual, political, personal life style, etc.). The participants engaged in an intensive written dialogue, where I, as the instructor, “stayed out,” except to encourage and facilitate in terms of logistics. The future of this technique definitely lies in using computer aided, synchronous, written conversation, a technique which has been piloted with undergraduates as reported by Ittzes (1997). Specific examples, once again in the voices of the graduate students themselves, are included here.

*EO: Hello OG! After we had such a lively discussion on Thursday about old, habitual ways of thinking, and then we discovered how quickly some of us (especially VA and I) are ready to categorize and deprecate some people based only on how they furnish and arrange their living rooms [based on photographs], where they go on vacation, what and how they eat, etc. I'm asking myself if that is also the case in America. I really can't imagine that people would do this so quickly here as we do in Germany. . . . What do you think? . . . As to the photographs we saw [in class]: when I see something like that and think about it, I always want to believe that the woman is “positioned” that way by chance, without the photographer asking her*

to do it. Maybe she just sat down there, because she wanted to, because she is used to being in the background, because she feels better there. Of course this is also a bad thing, if people are to the point where women just let themselves be satisfied with a hundred year long habit, or maybe even don't realize, how they are excluded or pushed into a certain position. Well, it's going to be a long, slow process, first to make women aware of such things, to sensitize them, and then to make it clear to them, that they are perhaps satisfied with many things because they are used to it that way, and not because it comes naturally to them.

OG: Hi E! I am sitting here eating my veggie couscous and almost crying over your entry #9. I should probably say that the stories of all of your friends is sad and shocking. You certainly have been through a lot. . . . Not only father-son conflicts occur, but also mother-son, and brother/sister conflicts arise (believe me, I know). My "subjective Theory" is that young men are destined to have conflict with their fathers, because men who grow up become heads of households and, in essence, make their own fathers obsolete. This is the typical father-son thing which Thomas Mann, Franz Kafka, and . . . [other] Germans wrote/write about. God, to have answers to this generational thing!!!

VA: Hello F!!!! First, I want to talk briefly about our course, before I take on another topic. . . . I have the impression, that some people aren't taking the contents of the course so seriously, because the way this course is structured is very different from the expectations of traditional course syllabi. Whatever is new causes a lack of understanding ( . . . isn't exactly THAT our course topic???) [sic] and I think that this lack of understanding then . . . leads to defense mechanisms, that perhaps wouldn't develop these defenses in a "more traditional" structure of the course. . . . I wanted to chat about everyday understandings and subjective theories. I think that this field is thematized much too rarely, since I am convinced that a major portion of our daily judgments and prejudices, values, decisions, etc. are made on the basis of general knowledge, and that we are not at all conscious enough about how deeply we are influenced by this. There is rarely a requirement for explaining our value judgments, and if so, then they are quickly satisfied with a reference to

*pseudo-scientific explanations. [There are always the exceptions.] . . . dangerous prejudices develop and become stereotypes, which effect [sic] new things negatively. I think that it is important for work on [a person's] standpoints so that the person at least starts to become conscious about value judgments, which are based on every-day knowledge or on subjective theories. Also, and especially in intercultural exchange this work on becoming conscious should be done, so that a person doesn't become a "victim" of his own cultural background. What do you think?*

As becomes quickly obvious from these fairly typical entries in the Partner Journals, the participants in the course took their discussions from class, from their own subjective theories, from their experiences, and even from their teaching experiences, well beyond what could be accomplished in a typical class session. The topics of their journal entries, which ranged quite widely around the participants' own experiences and subjective theories, but which never strayed into the trivial in any respect, are here self-explanatory and need no further comment. A few comments in terms of voice and footing in these sample entries are, however, worthy of some brief (and definitely not exhaustive) analytical comments. First, all participants wrote directly to their partners, which became clear in their use of forms of address and their contextualization of their comments, even to the point of what they were doing (eating, etc.) at the time of the "conversations." The personal nature of these exchanges was important to all participants, and made my reading of them also a type of "eavesdropping" on dialogue. Despite this mutually acknowledged eavesdropping when I read the entries, there seemed to be no explicit anxieties for the participants connected to this situation.

Another interesting set of issues concerns the frame and voice (Tannen 1993) that the participants chose. In EO's entry, she begins with an agentive voice, and uses the first person to describe her own and another woman's reactions in a class discussion. As she moves on to the topic of women habitually taking a background position, and her hopes for the future on this topic, she uses a distancing and objectifying third person grammatical subject to talk about women. She is not yet, at least as evidenced by this entry, an agent who is identifying with her own particular positionality in relation to this topic. This interpretation is supported by her choice of the all encompassing generalization "women," rather than qualifying it with "some," for example. She can and wants to write about



it, but she does not seem willing to move into the position of an agent identified with women in this situation.

Another quite obvious indication from these entries is that subjective and standpoint theories, positionality, and epistemological research took on a living meaning for nearly all of the participants. VA was very articulate about finding her own stronger objectivity and discussing the process of her own epistemological research in terms of the process evaluation of the course participants, structures, and topics. While she generalizes and moves to an analytical or objective voice, it does not seem to be the same type of distancing that EO engages in. VA rather has a strongly objective and agentive voice in her use of third person toward the end of this entry, and she states her opinion clearly from within the positional context of a process evaluation not only of the course structures and outcomes, but also in terms of her own epistemological development. In sum, then, these results document techniques for creating and sustaining a dialogue by course partners among each other and with their own gradually developing interculturally learning Selves.

As is partially stated and strongly implied in the excerpt from OG's entry, participants also wrote about very personal and not always pleasant experiences. They, also without exception, reacted affectively, shared each other's painful and joyful experiences, and expressed their very personal and agentive reactions to each other's joys and sorrows. What was interesting, and exemplified by OG's entry excerpt, is that participants did not stop with sharing and caring. They continued to combine the voices of experiences with their knowledge and experiences from a more theoretical perspective. They were able to show, in many different contexts and examples, a strong connection between the languages of experience and theory, and therefore gain new perspectives, explore new or modified positionalities, and expand their epistemological research in mutually enriching ways. The success of these course structures has shown that the risks involved with an instructor's exclusively maintaining the role of facilitator and resource, the underpinnings of which have their roots in epistemological research and positional pedagogies, are well worth taking.

## Conclusions

The examples from these case studies on teacher narratives in coordination meetings and within written dialogues on subjective theories and positional pedagogies in the graduate course, as well as the brief analyses

offered here, show how these types of epistemological research can explicate the construction of knowledge and reflect relationships among agentic individuals and Others. Constellations and negotiations of power within several contexts that are salient to the research, teaching, and service of the LPD are also thematized. We have presented:

- some of the complexities of the interplay among individual narratives and subjective theories;
- the group dynamics in class-related and coordination-related contexts;
- teachers and class participants as narrators of experience and theory;
- some of the details of our particular context and the more general context of SLACAT; and
- the institutional contexts surrounding all of these.

Just as the TAs in various contexts were able to reinforce connections between the languages of experience and theory in many different ways, we see these case studies as a way to increase understanding of Self and Other for LPDs who have the responsibility of being the most bilingual in the languages of experience and theory in all aspects of the work we do. We'd like to conclude with a final quotation from one of the journal entries of our participants (OG):

*If there's one thing I learned at UA that I will take with me forever:  
Those who 'can' . . . teach, those who 'can't' go into some less significant line of work. (right, Mary?)*

Right! If we as LPDs can leave at least this subjective theory with our TAs as a main strand in the web of relationships that captures the parallels between epistemological research and pedagogy, then we have accomplished a great deal indeed.

## Notes

1. "A web of relationships is the metaphor that best captures the parallels between research and pedagogy." (Maher and Tetrault 1994, p. 229).
2. My contributions to this discussion are partially based on my dissertation (in progress): *Teachers Talking Shop: A Discourse Study of TA Coordination Meetings*. University of Arizona.

3. HIAT stands for "Halbinterpretative Arbeitstranskription," and was developed by Erlich (e.g., 1994) to facilitate the writing of transcriptions. Ehlich explains the choice of name as follows:

*"... interpretative" refers to the overall hermeneutic process of understanding the spoken data. That the process is open to further analytical steps is reflected in the qualification of the name as being "semi-interpretative (halbinterpretativ)." A fine English version of the name that still preserved the acronym has been proposed by Dafydd Gibbon: "Heuristic Interpretive Auditory Transcription [...]" (1993, p. 125).*

HIAT runs on MS-DOS and represents data in the form of a graphic unit similar to a musical score or partiture (see data samples in the article). This format offers an adept visual representation of simultaneously occurring verbal and non-verbal behavior. The "score transcription" (p. 131) makes overlaps and turn-taking easy to note and analyze. According to Ehlich:

*"A musical score makes use of the two-dimensionality of an area for representation purposes. Semiotic events arrayed horizontally on a line follow each other in time, whereas events on the same vertical axis represent simultaneous acoustic events produced by different musical instruments, such as the violin, the trumpet and the piano. One can consider simultaneous speech of several speakers at a time as a complex acoustic event similar to the simultaneous realization of a multitude of musical notes in a concerto." (1993, p. 129)*

The program is able to accommodate up to nine speakers. For each, it provides one line for the representation of verbal communication, and up to four lines for the notation of non-verbal features. Since this version of HIAT does not automatically separate words, the lines for each speaker flow like a "band" (Ehlich 1993, p. 137) from one unit in the score to the next.

4. The following transcription symbols are most pertinent to this analysis:
- (.) short, untimed pause of one-tenth of a second or less
  - cut-off
  - () doubtful or barely comprehensible sequence
  - CAPS denotes emphasis

5. Initials used are for pseudonyms of the actual persons involved. Only enough personal data is supplied here to help establish identity issues that are potentially salient for the discussion at hand. Data was collected and used in reporting with the explicit permission of the subjects.
6. All segments from student writing are used here with the explicit permission of the authors. Authors' initials have been changed to respect anonymity. Most entries were written in German. Rather than reproducing both the original and the translation, only translations (by the two authors of this contribution) are included here to save space.
7. These comments were made in the Partner Journals which will be discussed in more details below.

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# THE PROFESSIONALIZATION OF LANGUAGE TEACHERS: A CASE STUDY OF THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF LECTURERS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

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## Introduction

**T**he Berkeley Language Center (BLC) was established in July 1994 as a resource center for language teachers at the University of California, Berkeley. In addition to its general mission of improving and strengthening language instruction on the Berkeley campus, one of its primary mandates as set forth by the Dean of the College of Letters and Sciences has been the professionalization of approximately fifty-five lecturers engaged in language teaching, language program direction, and the supervision of TAs.<sup>1</sup> As might be expected, the task of interpreting what the term professionalization should mean was no simple matter. Far from being innocent or univalent, the term professionalization carries with it distinctly different interpretations and agendas depending on the perspective of the speaker. For a dean, for example, professionalization may be driven by institutional and budgetary needs for stricter assessment procedures for rehiring, promotion, and downsizing. From the perspective of the directors of such centers, more often than not faculty whose research specialties are applied linguistics and/or second language acquisition, professionalization entails professional and intellectual

development in regard to both the theory and practice of foreign language teaching and learning. Because decisions to professionalize language teachers generally come from above, with lecturers as the object rather than the initiators of the move to greater professionalization, the voices of the very constituency that will be affected by such undertakings are often overlooked or left out of the equation altogether. Thus, in order to hear first-hand from those it was asked to professionalize, the BLC conducted a comprehensive survey of lecturers teaching foreign languages in Spring 1997. The purpose of the survey was to gather information on how the BLC could assist language teachers in their work and to draw up initial recommendations as to how the BLC could respond to the professional development needs of lecturers.

Though emanating from the experiences of language teachers on one particular campus, the survey results brought to light issues and questions concerning teaching, research, and professional development that are of potential interest to language teachers and language program coordinators on a wider scale. In the following, we will give an overview of the major outcomes of the survey, with emphasis on issues pertaining to the professional development needs reported by lecturers. We will then conclude by describing a framework for the professional development of lecturers that is being developed at UC Berkeley and which may be of use to other universities as well.

## **The Survey**

The survey (Appendix 1) was mailed to 55 people and was completed by 37, a return rate of 67%. We eliminated one of the surveys, as the respondent was not a lecturer. Thus, the data in this report are based on the responses of 36 lecturers who teach languages at UC Berkeley. The respondents came from eleven different departments or programs and, all combined, taught 29 different languages (Appendix 2).

The survey consisted of eight major sections, each of which asked in-depth questions about a specific area: General information on employment; Background information on education and training; Teaching; Professional Activities; Supervision of TAs; Berkeley Language Center resources; Language Media Center; and Suggestions for future support from the BLC. The numeric answers were quantified, and basic descriptive statistics were compiled. Non-numeric data were coded as consistently as possi-

ble in order to obtain uniformity in reporting. A draft of the survey report was presented to the lecturers in September 1997, which yielded useful feedback on the data and provided a check on the accuracy of the data.

For the purpose of this article we will focus on those sections of the survey which shed light on the issue of the professionalization of lecturers. Thus, the major findings on such issues as academic preparation of lecturers, teaching and research, and TA supervision, have been included, but some of the less relevant—or campus-specific data—have been omitted.

### **Lecturer Profile**

Of the thirty-six lecturers who responded to the survey, more than a quarter (10) were language program directors. The number of years that the lecturers had been teaching at UC Berkeley ranged from a minimum of one to a maximum of thirty-two years, with an average of ten. This suggests a high degree of stability and professional commitment. In terms of types of contracts, 21 (66%) were employed 100% time, 7 (22%) were employed in the 90–99% range, and 4 (13%) in the 33–67% time range. Seventeen, or half of the lecturers, had one-year renewable contracts, 14 (41%) had three-year renewable positions, and 2 (6%) had “Security of Employment”, i.e., tenure for lecturers, a rank no longer attainable for lecturers at UC Berkeley.

In regard to educational background, more than half of the lecturers responding (23 or 62%) listed a Master’s Degree as the highest degree level attained. One third (12) had Ph.D.s; and two held B.A.s. Almost two-thirds of the respondents stated that they had completed either a Master’s or Ph.D. program with a focus on linguistics (10) and/or applied linguistics/pedagogy (12), while one-third (12) indicated course work mostly in literature. A small subset of the respondents had done course work primarily in the literature/linguistics of a language other than the one they currently teach or in a different subject matter altogether. As we will discuss in greater detail later in this chapter, the fact that a full two-thirds of the lecturers did not complete a degree that involved a major research project such as a dissertation points to the need to provide a well-structured forum in which lecturers can both articulate a research project and become versed in research methodologies. Finally in regard to the profile of lecturers, the overwhelming majority of those who responded were native speakers of the languages they taught (30 or 81%).

## Teaching

One section of the survey dealt with the teaching methodologies and classroom activities employed in the language classes on the Berkeley campus. The responses to these questions indicated that most of the language programs were communicatively oriented. Methodological preferences are listed below in order of frequency of response.

*Table 1*  
Teaching Approaches

Communicative approach	25	(67%)*
Grammar-based approaches	15	(40%)
Eclecticism	15	(40%)
Natural approach	7	(18%)
Audiolingualism	6	(16%)
Other	2	(5%)

\*In some cases, more than one answer was given

Classroom activities were rated on a scale of 4.0 (very important) to 1.0 (not at all important). In descending order of importance, the activities were ranked as indicated in Table 2.

In general, the more communicatively oriented activities (e.g., conversation or group work) were favored over the more traditional activities, such

*Table 2*  
Perceived Importance of Classroom Activities

Type of Activity	Mean Score; 4.0 = most important
Conversation	3.7
Group/pair work	3.5
Analyzing texts	2.9
Problem-solving	2.8
Reading aloud	2.1
Lecture	1.9
Reciting poems	1.8
Choral response	1.7
Rote memorization	1.7
Dialog memorization	1.6

as rote memorization and choral response. However, not all activity types appeared to be clearly understood within the context of communicative methodology. Problem-solving, for example, was misinterpreted by some as not relevant to language teaching and as such was not recognized as a communicative activity. Additional activities that were not listed in the survey choices but that were mentioned in the survey answers were oral presentations, role-play, videos, and translation.

Although the communicative approach was the most frequently mentioned approach and seemed generally well integrated into the language teaching programs, some of the responses suggested that the concept of communicative language teaching might be unclear. Several responses, for instance, indicated a contrasting mixture of methodologies, such as communicative language teaching and grammar-translation method, or communicative and audiolingual methods. In some cases, this was due to the fact that classical or “dead” languages were taught, but in other responses methodological choices were less clear. Appropriate techniques and activities, for example, were not consistently identified in the survey. It appears, then, that the majority of the language programs has embraced the communicative method, but that the concept of communicative language teaching is apparently not always theoretically meaningful.

The lecturers were asked to indicate those areas in which they felt they did well and those areas where they felt they needed improvement (thus more than one area could be checked off on their form). Table 3 lists the

*Table 3*  
Aspects of Teaching that Instructors Thought They Did Well

	# of affirmative responses (%)	
Teaching culture	31	(86%)
Motivating students	31	(86%)
Teaching grammar	29	(80%)
Group work	26	(72%)
Working with literary texts	23	(64%)
Helping students write better	23	(64%)
Teaching pronunciation	22	(61%)
Classroom time management	22	(61%)
Grading students' work	17	(47%)
Using computers in teaching	7	(19%)

aspects of teaching with which instructors felt comfortable in descending order of frequency of response.

The aspects of teaching that lecturers wished to improve are listed in Table 4 in descending order of frequency of response.

*Table 4*  
Aspects of Teaching that Instructors Wished to Improve

	# of responses (%)	
Using computers in teaching	23	(64%)
Helping students write better	12	(33%)
Group work	10	(28%)
Working with literary texts	8	(22%)
Grading students' work	7	(19%)
Teaching pronunciation	6	(17%)
Teaching culture	6	(17%)
Motivating students	6	(17%)
Classroom time management	4	(11%)
Teaching grammar	2	(6%)

It is not surprising that responses which scored low in Table 3 generally scored high in Table 4 and vice versa, but this was not always the case. Lecturers clearly wished to learn more about using computers in language instruction but did not consider technology to be one of their strengths in teaching. We will discuss this in greater detail below. Writing and group work were also areas in which the instructors felt they needed improvement. In contrast, most felt that they did well with grammar and culture and motivating students, with only a small percentage of respondents indicating that these were aspects of their teaching that they would like to improve. The fact that group work was listed *both* as something the respondents felt they did well *and* as an aspect of teaching that needed improvement points to one of several contradictions in the survey results. It may suggest that instructors consider group work to be an important aspect of the communicative classroom and would like to continue to develop this skill or that group work has become an icon or ideal that lecturers feel they must identify with and support.

## Research

Another section of the survey, entitled "Professional Activities," asked specific questions about various aspects of professional development: subscriptions to professional journals, membership in professional organizations, and involvement in research. The survey indicated that the lecturers read and/or subscribed to an average of 2.3 professional journals in the area of language teaching. However, this number actually represents less than half of the lecturers who responded to the survey, as twenty of the lecturers responded "none" or gave no response. The respondents most frequently mentioned language-specific journals (40%) (e.g., the *French Review*, *Al'Arabiyya*, *Korean Language in America*), while other journals that were mentioned repeatedly were *The Modern Language Journal*, *Foreign Language Annals*, and *TESOL Quarterly*. The majority of the lecturers (59%) belonged to a language-specific organization (e.g., the American Association of Teachers of German, the Association for Asian Studies, Association of Teachers of Japanese), while a small percentage belonged to national organizations such as the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (21%) or the Modern Language Association (16%).

Fourteen people reported being engaged in research on the teaching of foreign languages (38%). Their work included articles and conference presentations, textbook chapters, video projects, and technology-related teaching materials. An equal number of lecturers was not engaged in any kind of research, while nine gave no response to this question. Fifteen of the people who reported not doing research or who did not answer the question indicated that they would be interested in doing research in the future. Twenty-one people did not respond to this question. It appears, then, that a significant number of the lecturers (41%) would be interested in pursuing research, but are not currently so engaged.

A number of factors appear to play a role in keeping lecturers from seeking a more active role in research. The most frequently cited factor in the survey was that of time constraints. Course loads for full-time lecturers are higher than for tenure-track faculty and average three courses per semester. Lecturer salaries are, however, generally lower, which is one of the reasons that many lecturers teach during the summer as well. Table 5 provides an overview of the teaching load per semester for the lecturers surveyed.

Some of the lecturers were involved in team-teaching, which accounts for the course loads exceeding the three-course maximum per semester.

*Table 5*  
**Course Loads for Lecturers per Semester**

	<b>Fall</b>		<b>Spring</b>		<b>Summer</b>	
	# (%) of lecturers n = 36		# (%) of lecturers n = 36		# (%) of lecturers n = 36	
5 courses:	1	(3%)	0	(0%)	0	(0%)
4 courses:	0	(0%)	1	(3%)	0	(0%)
3 courses:	14	(39%)	13	(36%)	1	(3%)
2 courses:	12	(33%)	14	(39%)	2	(5%)
1 course:	6	(17%)	6	(17%)	13	(36%)
No answer:	3	(8%)	2	(5%)	20	(55%)

Language coordinators at UC Berkeley generally receive half a course to one course per semester release time for program coordination and supervision of graduate student instructors (GSIs). Therefore the 36% of the lecturers who reported a two-course teaching load were most likely the language coordinators in the survey. Though lecturers are not generally required to serve on departmental or university committees, a significant percentage (43%) reported committee service, with the majority reporting committee service related to TA issues. Only two individuals (6%) reported service on Ph.D. or M.A. committees.

Language program coordinators, as a group, cited departmental duties as another major time constraint, as they were expected to be involved in a large number of activities including student placement, supervision of TAs, curriculum development, administrative tasks, and committee work.

A second factor which appeared to limit research initiatives was lack of funding for research-related expenses and lack of release time to conduct research. Departmental funding is generally not available for lecturers for travel to conferences and meetings, although limited travel funds are available from several entities on campus, such as the Berkeley Language Center or the Center for Western European Studies, and may be applied for on a competitive basis. As lecturers are expected to be primarily engaged in teaching, research is not considered central to their duties and is not financially supported within departments.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, no course release time is available for lecturers to conduct research, nor is financial or administrative assistance offered for research projects. Limited funding is



available, however, outside the department in the form of research fellowships or instructional grants.

The position of the lecturers within the academic hierarchy, then, is a third factor which affects the role that research plays in professional lives. Lecturer appointments and evaluations are based upon satisfactory teaching performance and on instruction-related matters, such as TA supervision and program coordination. Thus, there is little incentive for lecturers to engage in research efforts which will most likely not be taken into account in re-appointment or retention decisions. The distinction between lecturers and tenure-track faculty is not simply a matter of academic rank, but also clearly divides the tasks of teaching versus research as noted previously by Patrikis (1995).

The survey raised some serious questions about what constitutes research and about how research should be perceived. Several of the respondents who answered that they were not engaged in research nevertheless reported being involved in a variety of exciting and innovative projects, such as production of videos or CD-ROMs, textbook writing, workshops, and so forth. This suggests that the notion of "research" appears to be rather narrowly defined and perhaps restricted to more theoretical topics, while more practical topics are not counted as "real" research. A less rigid and traditional view of research is therefore necessary in order for lecturers and language program coordinators to recognize and value their contributions as research and to capitalize on their expertise in the areas of teaching and classroom-related issues. It may be useful to explore both the development of knowledge of the field and ways of conducting research as elements which comprise the domain of classroom research.

An important first step in approaching research is familiarity with the literature of the field and awareness of the theoretical and methodological advances in second language acquisition research. It was disappointing to note that more than fifty percent of the respondents in our survey gave no indication of reading professional journals. This was even more striking, since our respondents can be presumed to be a more engaged group of lecturers given that they had taken the initiative to fill out the questionnaire. Based on the fact that a large number of respondents indicated that they would be interested in doing research, the reading of professional journals would seem a logical place to start. A useful model in this respect is that provided by Johnson (1992, pp. 6–7), who argues against the "consumer" model of research in which teachers passively read information and then

attempt to apply the research in the classroom. She notes that “[i]t is more productive to take the attitude that research provides an impetus that encourages us to reflect continually on language use and learning processes, to rethink practice, and to take action to improve practice.” Johnson proposes an alternate model which views applying research as “re-seeing learning” and which focuses on the insights gained from reading research.

A second step is that of conducting one’s own research. As suggested earlier, a number of the lecturers were already engaged in various projects but did not necessarily consider this research. It is necessary that teachers become aware of their own expertise and their opportunities to contribute to the field. There has been ample debate on, for example, the role of research in teaching and on the cross-fertilization of teaching practice and research (see, for instance, Clarke 1994; Pica 1994). Johnson and Chen note:

*In addition to teachers’ roles as active constructors of knowledge from the research they read and hear reported, many researchers, teachers, and teacher-researchers alike advocate new and expanding roles for teachers in the research process. These roles include teachers initiating and conducting research themselves, participating in teacher inquiry groups, or collaborating with university professors in joint projects. (1992, p. 214)*

The interest in such an approach to research and practice was evident in our survey, as the respondents expressed an interest in workshops or lectures on practical topics which focus on classroom and teaching practice in addition to the current lecture series on theoretical topics. This appears to dovetail with the outcome of the self-evaluation of teaching practice (see Tables 1-4), which indicated a need for continued professional development in areas that instructors considered central to their teaching methodology and to their future direction in language teaching.

## Computers

The questions in the survey pertaining to computer use in teaching brought forth valuable information about the extent to which lecturers used computers in teaching and the extent to which lecturers were interested in improving their skills in this area.

The majority of lecturers indicated that they use computers to one extent or another in their teaching. However, about one-third of the

lecturers who responded seemed to have interpreted the question “Do you use computers in teaching or to supplement teaching?” to mean using computers as a word-processing tool, whereas the other two-thirds interpreted the question in regard to using computers in an “interactive way,” i.e., using a computer as a writing-enhancing tool. Most lecturers reported that they used computers in order to create hand-outs and extra teaching materials for their classes. About one-third reported that they had created class Web sites and used computers during class time to teach their respective languages. This latter type of use took place in a computer lab with a frequency ranging from once a week to never. As to the value computer use has had for students, twenty-four of the twenty-six lecturers responding to this section indicated “somewhat helpful” to “very helpful,” although no indication was given as to how they came to this overall assessment. It is probably safe to conclude that students seem to be benefiting from the use of computer—whether as a result of receiving a hand-out, using a CD-ROM multimedia program in the language lab, checking the class Web site for homework, or sending e-mail messages to a class discussion list or to the instructor.

The reason most lecturers gave for not using computers at all is clear. Either there was no appropriate material available for their language or what was available was on a platform that until recently was not extensively supported by the Berkeley’s Language Media Center (LMC). The recent opening of a new twenty-six-position computer lab will thus address a need clearly stated by respondents to this survey.

The problems generally encountered by the lecturers who used computers included limited lab accessibility, not enough computers, and the need for “better” software. The first two of these issues are related to budgetary constraints, and will most likely be eased by the addition of the new lab this fall. The need for “better” software is, however, a two-pronged issue which seems to suggest the need not only for more programs, but also for more relevant programs in general. Interestingly enough, there was no discussion of the pedagogical framework for using what are considered relevant programs. This lack of commentary on pedagogy is, however, consistent with the general discourse on the use of technology in the classroom and points to the need for a forum in which to critically discuss the pedagogical integration of technology.

For the lecturers who would like to but are not at present taking advantage of the new technology, most suggest that the LMC could assist them

by providing more computers in both platforms, conducting workshops demonstrating how various programs work, and offering basic tech-support with creating Web pages and setting up a class e-mail account. In addition, a large number of lecturers (28) stated that they would be interested in pursuing software development if technical and financial support (i.e., course release time) were available. There was an almost unanimous call for "one-stop shopping" so that lecturers could go to one place/person to address their technology needs.

### **TA Supervision**

More than half of the lecturers who responded to the survey (20) indicated that they were involved in the pedagogical preparation of TAs. These twenty lecturers represented twelve of the thirteen different language programs on the Berkeley campus. The number of TAs under the supervision of any given lecturer varied from a high of twenty to a low of one, with the average being five. It should be noted that various arrangements exist from department to department at Berkeley as to how supervision is organized. In some departments, there may be different supervisors for different levels of language courses while in other departments, one lecturer may be responsible for overseeing all TAs.

As might be expected, TAs at Berkeley are primarily responsible for teaching or assisting in first- and second-year language courses, although there are some exceptions to this as TAs advance in their graduate programs. For example, in at least three departments, experienced TAs may teach courses that fulfill the university-wide Reading and Composition course required of first-year students. In several departments, advanced TAs may teach upper-division conversation and writing courses. In still other situations, TAs assist in faculty-taught courses and may be discussion-section leaders for courses in literature and cultural studies. Advanced TAs may also have the opportunity to teach courses for graduate students on developing a reading knowledge of the language for research purposes.

### **Pre-semester Orientations**

As has been described in previous volumes in this series (Fox 1992; Pons 1993), departments of foreign languages and literature have a long-standing tradition of TA preparation programs. As has also been noted, however, most of the preparation that is given to TAs falls in the category of pre-service orientations and pedagogy seminars generally given in the first

semester or year that TAs teach. Berkeley is no exception to this. Of the twenty respondents, sixteen indicated that they offer a pre-semester orientation ranging from two hours to three days, and covering topics such as introduction to the departmental language program and course structure, introduction to the textbook and to basic teaching methodologies, the basics for getting started, and preparing for the first day. In addition to the departmental orientation, the Graduate Division's centralized office for TA development offers a three-hour workshop for TAs in foreign languages which complements the departmental programs.

While the adequacy of a department's pre-semester orientation can only be accurately evaluated in tandem with the ongoing preparation that TAs receive once they begin teaching, it does seem to be the case that the orientations cover logistics and pedagogy with emphasis on the former.

Based on these findings, one of the recommendations emanating from the survey is to explore the possibility of organizing and conducting a week-long orientation program at the beginning of the fall semester for all new TAs teaching foreign languages. TAs would meet together in the morning for general sessions and then in the afternoon with language program directors in their own departments for hands-on practical preparation such as lesson plan design and practice teaching. Significant to this endeavor and the process of professionalization would be the exchange of ideas among lecturers in preparation for the program. In the process of offering a more thorough orientation, this model would tap into and develop the expertise of the many different teachers on campus and would contribute to building an intellectual community while honoring the differences that exist from department to department in terms of pedagogical methodologies and philosophies.

### **Pedagogy Seminars**

Of the twelve language programs represented in the survey, two-thirds offer semester-long pedagogy seminars for TAs ranging from one to three hours per week. In one of the cases where there is no pedagogy seminar, a course is being designed for Fall 1998. Of the eight language programs that offer pedagogy seminars, there is variation as to the number of semesters that these seminars are required of TAs, ranging from one semester to four, with half of the departments reporting that TAs take a pedagogy seminar in each semester they teach. With the exception of one department, these pedagogy seminars are taken on a satisfactory/unsatisfactory basis, most

likely reflecting the commonly held attitude in many departments of language and literature that language teaching and the preparation of TAs for teaching careers lacks a scholarly basis and should therefore not be considered on a par with other aspects of the graduate academic program. The course requirements of these seminars may also reflect prevalent attitudes of departments or of lecturers themselves regarding the intellectual rigor that can be required of graduate students in these courses. In only three of the eight departments, for example, are TAs required to write a research paper as part of the course, something that would be almost unheard of in other graduate seminars.

The finding that half of the departments require TAs to participate in pedagogy seminars in each semester of teaching raises questions about the nature and definition of pedagogy seminars. In many cases, a pedagogy seminar is limited to practical training, where TAs meet weekly with the program coordinator to discuss teaching methods for any particular part of a chapter. In other cases, a pedagogy seminar is one that discusses pedagogical theory in tandem with its day-to-day application. In yet other cases, a pedagogy seminar is one that attempts to go beyond pedagogical theory or methodologies to address issues in the field of second language acquisition theory. In order to understand the differences that exist, we collected syllabi from the various language programs to analyze where these programs fall along this continuum. What we came to see is that most of the courses covered varying combinations of theory and practical application, with some programs teaching professional skills such as textbook analysis and classroom observation techniques that will serve the TAs well in their careers as language teachers. Based on the fact that different pedagogical approaches and practical expertise (e.g., working with literary texts, working with written essays) are needed in each level of teaching, the model that seems the most useful is to offer TAs a pedagogy course over several semesters to coincide with the progression of courses from beginning to advanced that a TA might teach. This model would incorporate a weekly discussion both of pedagogical theory and day-by-day teaching over the course of four semesters.

Because these departmentally-based pedagogy seminars do not allow time to discuss in much detail broader issues of second language acquisition theory, a course addressing these issues can be developed. For example the BLC currently offers such a course which is intended for

graduate student instructors who are entering the job market and need to be familiar with recent developments in second language acquisition theory, applied linguistics, and language pedagogy. The course is also open to lecturers from all foreign language programs. It is offered as a variable credit course (two to four units) with the option of taking it on a pass/fail basis. One way for this cross-departmental SLA course to contribute to the further professional and intellectual development of lecturers would be to rotate its teaching among qualified lecturers. Lecturers who teach the course could be encouraged to create a course portfolio that would include metacritical commentary on their course syllabus, materials, assignments, and teaching methodologies that would be of use to other lecturers planning to teach the course in the future.

### **Classroom Observation and Videotaping of TAs**

Three-fourths of the lecturers involved in the supervision of TAs reported conducting classroom observations and/or videotaping of TAs. The frequency of the observations ranged from one to five times per semester, with most respondents indicating that they conduct two classroom observations. One interesting point was that the highest frequency of classroom observation was in those programs that lacked a pedagogy seminar. This suggested to us that a more frequent one-on-one coaching/mentoring structure might partially compensate for the absence of a weekly group meeting. It is also important to note that the situations in which there was no classroom observation of TAs involved lecturers supervising advanced TAs. In other words, classroom observation and videotaping are most commonly used to foster the pedagogical development of TAs new to language teaching. Given recent research on the developmental stages of TAs (Nyquist and Sprague 1992), it would seem useful to consider the progressively different needs of TAs at various levels of experience.

When asked about the procedures used for classroom observation, there was substantial variation among respondents regarding preparatory and follow-up procedures. Approximately half of those who conducted classroom observations engaged in a pre-observation discussion, while all followed up the observation by a discussion with the TA. In addition, roughly one half of the TA supervisors who conducted classroom observations provided written feedback, either directly to the TA, for their individual use, or to a departmental file.

In more than a third of the language programs at Berkeley, faculty other than the TA supervisor or language program coordinator were reported to be involved in classroom observations of TAs. The procedures for these observations were not discussed in the survey as thoroughly as were those of the supervising coordinators, and these visitations raise questions as to how they are conducted and for what purposes. In some departments, faculty who do not teach language courses may wish to keep themselves apprised of what is transpiring in the language courses that prepare undergraduates for advanced courses taught by faculty. Where this is the case, faculty may learn a great deal from observing classes. If, on the other hand, classroom observation is used for the purpose of evaluation, it is unlikely that the faculty visiting the class will be in a position to accurately assess the pedagogical issues involved. Most senior faculty have not had the opportunity to stay abreast of the research in pedagogy and in second language acquisition theory and therefore may make recommendations that are in opposition to those of the language program coordinator, creating a predicament for the TA who is being given divergent messages and feedback. Language program coordinators can play a significant role in avoiding this scenario by holding a workshop for faculty and TAs on how best to conduct classroom observations. This should, of course, be based on an approach that views observation as a process of mutual exchange and learning (Wilkerson 1988).

One additional form of classroom observation that is gaining in popularity across the disciplines at Berkeley is that of peer observation. About one-third of the language programs at Berkeley require TAs to participate in a peer observation program with two other programs strongly encouraging TAs to do so. It is interesting to note that pre- and post-observation discussions are far less common when TAs visit each other than when supervisors observe TAs. Similar to the recommendation for faculty who participate in classroom observations but are not otherwise involved in the language program, the peer observation programs could be enhanced by the introduction of specific procedures that could turn the observations into a more rigorous mutual exchange. One way in which the BLC could assist language program coordinators, faculty observers, and TAs alike would be to organize a discussion and research group on the theory and practice of classroom observation using, for example, the volume *Face to Face* (Lewis 1988) as a text.



## Future Changes

When asked what types of changes they would like to make to their programs in order to prepare TAs for teaching, lecturers offered the following suggestions, all of which can be viewed as integral facets of a comprehensive TA development program. Several lecturers would like to offer additional, more extensive, or improved pedagogy seminars. Three respondents would like to have a more comprehensive pre-semester orientation; one respondent indicated that s/he felt that a more graded/apprenticeship model of teaching would be desirable, i.e., that students in the first semester should grade papers, monitor language lab exercises, and so forth, and should then start teaching only in the second semester. Another person indicated that TAs should have comprehensive training before beginning to teach, not concurrent with the first semester. Others stated that they would like to add more theoretical readings to the pedagogy seminars or would like to be able to offer a seminar in each of the four semesters of beginning and intermediate language teaching. One respondent also noted that s/he would like to improve the pedagogy seminar in the area of professional development.

The suggestions that the respondents made point to the need to rethink the space and importance we grant to the preparation of future faculty in our graduate programs. When one considers that most graduate students will be employed in faculty positions where often the majority of what they will be teaching are language courses, the need to expand the training of graduate students in areas such as applied linguistics, pedagogical methods, and second language acquisition theory becomes apparent.

## Creating a Framework for Professional Development

In this section we would like to describe a framework being constructed at UC Berkeley for the professional development of lecturers. This framework includes opportunities for research (BLC Fellowships, research interest groups), exchange of ideas among peers (e-mail lists, *BLC Newsletter*, syllabus exchange, peer observation and videotaping, town meetings), technical support (Language Media Center), and development of theoretical and practical knowledge of the field (BLC workshops, courses).

Three recently established programs which show particular potential for addressing the research and professional development interests of lecturers are the BLC Fellowship program, research interest groups, and a professional development workshop series.

### **BLC Fellows**

Initiated prior to the survey in the 1996-97 academic year, this program provides financial support to a limited number of lecturers and graduate students for research on instructional development projects. The fellows meet weekly with the Director and the Associate Director of the BLC as a research team to discuss their projects, and they present their projects at a BLC workshop at the end of the fellowship semester or year. Fellows are also encouraged to submit their project to professional journals for publication. Projects have included developing a training program for Chinese character conversion on CD-ROM, designing a CD-ROM for teaching Latin-American culture, creating a discourse-based curriculum for third-semester German, the introduction of Francophone texts into the second-year French curriculum, and developing a curriculum in Afrikaans.

### **Research Groups**

In response to the interest expressed in the survey for greater focus on non-Western languages and for the provision of opportunities for lecturers to meet with peers to exchange ideas on specific topics, a research interest group on heritage languages has been established. This group, which includes participants from a variety of languages, such as Tagalog, Vietnamese, Chinese, and Spanish, will explore, for instance, what the specific needs of heritage language speakers are within each department and how departments can develop or adapt language curricula for native speakers.

### **Professional Development Workshops**

Based on feedback received from the survey, the BLC has offered a professional development workshop series for lecturers on the topic of developing a teaching portfolio. Six lecturers from five different language programs and one international exchange student took part. The series consisted of four sessions held once a month for two hours. A syllabus was designed to enable participants to move step-by-step through reflective activities to construct a portfolio. Over the course of the semester,

participants developed and received peer feedback on statements of teaching philosophy. They also took part in a peer observation program, conducted and reflected upon mid-course evaluations, and kept teaching journals. A listserv, which will be extended to all lecturers in fall semester 1998, was also developed. One of the positive outcomes of the series was that the lecturers were highly interested and engaged in the process of reflecting on teaching which is at the heart of portfolio construction, rather than simply focusing on the outcome of producing a portfolio to use in the review process. Based on feedback from the participants, additional professional development workshops and activities are being considered for the future.

### **Implications**

The institutional practice of hiring language teaching professionals without carefully formulating a structure for professional and intellectual development that would address the differences that exist among lecturers in terms of educational background and expertise is one that needs to be carefully analyzed by the profession. In addition, the almost exclusive identification of lecturers with teaching institutionally sanctions the all-too-familiar divide between language teaching on the one hand and literature and theory on the other and blatantly withholds from the project of second language acquisition and the teaching of foreign languages the rigorous scholarly expectations, standards, and respect which characterize all other aspects of departments of modern languages and literature.

Given the fact that lecturers currently employed at U.S. institutions are generally not hired with the understanding that they will be evaluated on anything but teaching, one needs to be particularly sensitive about changing the game rules mid-stream. What the survey at Berkeley tells us, however, is that in many instances, the desire to conduct research and to participate in professional and intellectual development exists but that the conditions that would foster these endeavors do not. Thus, language centers such as the BLC have a central role to play in creating a context in which the research and professional development interests that lecturers express can evolve and be institutionally acknowledged. While the jury is still out as to whether or not all of the lecturers, given the opportunity, will take their stated research and professionalization desires and convert them into actual projects, constructing a framework that would allow this to happen is imperative.

## Acknowledgments

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## Notes

1. At the University of California, Berkeley teaching assistants are called Graduate Student Instructors (GSIs). Within the University of California system, the titles of 'Lecturer' and 'Senior Lecturer,' with or without 'Potential Security of Employment,' fall under the Non-Senate Instructional Unit.
2. It should be noted that differences may exist from department to department in the interpretation of the guidelines set forth for lecturers in their Union contract.

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## Appendix 1

### **Berkeley Language Center Survey of Language Lecturers at the University of California at Berkeley**

The Berkeley Language Center (BLC) is currently in the process of gathering information from language teachers on campus to determine the direction of BLC programs and how it can best serve the needs of language teachers on the Berkeley campus. Please take the time to fill out this questionnaire and return it to the BLC office, B-40 Dwinelle Hall, #2640 by *April 11, 1997*. Feel free to add comments on a separate page if you need more space.

#### *General Information*

Name

Title(s) (e.g., lecturer, tutor, language program coordinator—list all that apply)

Percentage employed

Type of contract (e.g., one-year renewable, three-year renewable, SOE, etc.)

Number of years teaching at Berkeley

Department

Address

Phone

E-mail address

#### *Background Information—Education and Training*

Educational degrees or U.S. equivalent:

B.A./B.S.

M.A./M.S.

Ph.D.

Other

**Please describe as specifically as possible the training you received to become a language teacher prior to coming to Berkeley.**

Course work/dissertation mostly in (Please check one):

Literature of the language you teach

Linguistics of the language you teach

- Applied Linguistics/pedagogy  
 Literature/linguistics of a language other than the one you teach  
 Different subject matter: \_\_\_\_\_

### *Teaching*

Language(s) you teach

Are you a native speaker of the language(s) you teach?

Please indicate the courses you teach, including those you currently teach and those you teach on a regular basis.

Please indicate how many hours per week these classes meet.

How many students on average do you have in each one of these classes?

How many courses do you teach in the fall, in the spring and in the summer?

If you are a language program coordinator, how much release time do you get for this activity?

Are you satisfied with the textbooks and ancillary materials you are now using? If not, what are the chief drawbacks?

### **How would you describe your method of teaching?**

1. Is it influenced by particular methodological approaches or techniques?

- Communicative approach  
 Grammar-based  
 Audio-lingual method  
 Natural approach  
 Eclectic  
 Other

2. Please rate the importance of the following activities in your teaching on a scale of 1 to 4, where 1 = not at all important, 2 = somewhat important, 3 = important, and 4 = very important.

- Pattern drills  
 Conversation  
 Lecture  
 Dictation  
 Group/pair work  
 Choral response

- Rote memorization
- Problem-solving
- Memorization of dialogue
- Reading aloud
- Reciting poems
- Analyzing texts
- Other

**What aspects of teaching do you think you do well? Check all that apply:**

- Working with literary texts
- Teaching grammar
- Group work
- Teaching culture
- Using computers in teaching
- Grading students' work
- Helping students write better
- Motivating students
- Classroom time management
- Teaching pronunciation
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**What aspects of your teaching would you like to improve? Check all that apply:**

- Working with literary texts
- Teaching grammar
- Group work
- Teaching culture
- Using computers in teaching
- Grading students' work
- Helping students write better
- Motivating students
- Classroom time management
- Teaching pronunciation
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_



**Describe the ways you use literary texts in the various levels of your courses by placing a check next to each rubric that applies, where B = beginning classes, I = intermediate classes, and A = advanced classes:**

B I A

- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ As a means for practicing pronunciation  
 \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ As a means to practice grammar  
 \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ As a point of departure for student compositions  
 \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ As a basis for communicative activities  
 \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ As part of teaching culture

**How do you deal with grammar in the various levels of your courses? Please place a check next to each rubric that applies, where B = beginning classes, I = intermediate classes, and A = advanced classes:**

B I A

- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Students read grammar explanations at home and we practice in class.  
 \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ I use communicative activities to practice grammar.  
 \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ I use drills to practice grammar.  
 \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ I teach grammar inductively.  
 \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ I teach grammar deductively.  
 \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ I don't teach grammar explicitly.  
 \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**DO YOU USE COMPUTERS IN TEACHING OR TO SUPPLEMENT TEACHING?**

1. Describe how you have used them.
2. How often during the semester?
3. To what extent do you believe this has been of value to the students?
4. What problems—if any—did you encounter?
5. If you choose not to use computers, why not?
6. If you do not use computers, but would like to, how could the BLC's Language Media Center (formerly known as the Language Laboratory) assist you?
7. Do you have access to a computer in your department? Does it meet your needs?
8. Do you have an e-mail account? If not, why?

**DO YOU USE VIDEOS IN YOUR TEACHING?**

1. How often during the semester?
2. If so, please describe how you have worked with videos and whether this has been of value to your students.
3. If you choose not to use videos, please explain why.

**BEYOND TEACHING THE COURSES YOU LISTED ABOVE, HOW DO YOU CONTRIBUTE TO SHAPING THE LANGUAGE PROGRAM IN YOUR DEPARTMENT?**

1. What is the structure of governance in your department regarding your language program?
2. How are language teaching decisions made? (e.g., textbook selection, who teaches what course, supervision of GSIs, development of the language program)
3. What voice do you have in these decisions?
4. Do you think greater input on your part in these areas would benefit the language program?
5. Do you serve on departmental committees? If yes, which ones?

***Professional Activities***

What journals do you currently read and/or subscribe to pertaining to language teaching? Indicate which ones you find most useful:

Are you engaged in research on teaching foreign languages? Please feel free to attach a copy of your C.V.

If you have not given papers or published articles, would you be interested in doing so in the future?

What professional organizations do you belong to? (Please write out full title.)

***Supervision of GSIs*** (Please skip this section if you do not supervise GSIs.)

How many GSIs do you supervise?

What courses do they teach?

**WHAT DO YOU CURRENTLY DO TO PREPARE YOUR GSIs FOR TEACHING? PLEASE GIVE AS MUCH DETAILED INFORMATION AS POSSIBLE:**

1. Pre-semester orientation. Please indicate length and content.

2. 300-level pedagogy seminar(s) (Please attach a course syllabus if there is one.)
3. What do you cover?
4. How often and for how many hours per week does the class meet?
5. How many semesters are the GSIs required to participate in a 300-level pedagogy seminar? Please do not include so-called "shadow courses," where students enroll for empty credits.
6. How many credits do GSIs receive?
7. Are these courses taken S/U or for a grade?
8. What are the course requirements?

#### **VIDEOTAPING AND CLASSROOM OBSERVATION:**

1. Are GSIs observed or taped during the semester? If yes, how many times?
2. Please describe the procedures you use, i.e., pre-observation discussion, videotaping, follow-up meeting, written summary, other.
3. Are other faculty in the department involved in classroom observations of GSIs?
4. Are GSIs required to observe other GSIs and, if so, are there formal procedures they are recommended to follow?

#### **EVALUATION OF GSI PREPARATION PROGRAM:**

1. Do you ask GSIs to evaluate the program they participate in to prepare them for teaching? Please describe what format you use to get feedback. (Midterm evaluation, end-of-semester, informal, verbal, etc.)
2. What aspects of the program do they find most useful?
3. Are there any changes you would like to make to improve the current program you have for preparing GSIs?
4. In what areas do you feel GSIs need more guidance than they are currently receiving?

#### **THE GSI TEACHING AND RESOURCE CENTER:**

1. Do you and/or your GSIs take part in the programs offered by the GSI Teaching and Resource Center? (e.g., orientation, grant programs,

workshops, individual consultations, seminar for faculty teaching with GSIs).

2. Are there any ways in which the GSI Teaching and Resource Center could be of greater assistance to you?

**TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU HAVE INPUT INTO:**

1. The selection of GSIs?
2. The assignment of GSIs to particular courses?
3. Determining whether GSIs should be rehired?

*Berkeley Language Center (BLC) Resources*

How many of the 6–7 annual BLC teacher training workshops do you attend?

Reasons for not attending the others:

What topics would you like to see addressed at these workshops?

Do you prefer hands-on, practical topics, theoretical topics, or both?

Do you have a preference as to the format of the workshops: lecture, interactive workshop, or do you like a combination of both?

Do you use the BLC reading room? Are there resources that would make you use the reading room more if available?

*The Language Media Center (LMC)*

**Which of the following currently available services of the Language Media Center (LMC) are used by your classes or your students (F = Frequently, O = Often, S = Seldom, N = Never)?**

F O S N

1. \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Audio tape drop-in listening facilities
2. \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Audio tape check-out for home use
3. \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Audio tape laboratory (for class listening in Rm. 33)
4. \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Purchase of audio tapes
5. \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Video tape viewing facilities (class and individual)
6. \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ SCOLA viewing facilities
7. \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ High-8 video cameras
8. \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ 16mm film
9. \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Macintosh computer lab
10. \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Portable equipment (overhead projectors, tape players, slide projectors, etc.)

**Which of the following services currently under development by the LMC would you and/or your students be interested in using (Y = Yes, P = Probably, U = Unlikely, N = No)?**

Y P U N

1. \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ A drop-in computer lab for F.L. resource software (encyclopedias, dictionaries, word processors)
2. \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ A drop-in computer lab for F.L. instruction software (commercial or locally developed language instruction software)
3. \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Multimedia development lab for digitizing materials and creating software
4. \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Check out laptop computers for presentations
5. \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Check out laptop computers for software development

**If available, would you use a high-tech classroom with access to unobtrusive networked computers, computer and video projection on large screen, and modular seating?**

\_\_\_ Yes      \_\_\_ Maybe      \_\_\_ No

**TELL US ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCES WITH COMPUTERS:**

1. Which computer environment do you currently use?  
\_\_\_ Macintosh    \_\_\_ Windows    \_\_\_ Other    \_\_\_ None
2. Which computer environment dominates in your language area, i.e., most available software for your language is on which platform?  
\_\_\_ Macintosh    \_\_\_ Windows    \_\_\_ Both
3. Is there sufficient support (financial, release time, training, reward for success) for you to pursue software development, if you so desire?  
\_\_\_ Yes, sufficient support  
\_\_\_ Insufficient support  
\_\_\_ No support
4. If there were financial incentives and technical support available, would you pursue development of software for foreign language instruction?  
\_\_\_ Yes  
\_\_\_ Probably

\_\_\_ Unlikely

\_\_\_ No

5. Please indicate the kind of technical support you would like to see the LMC offer.

**Are there other ways the LMC could better serve you?**

*How can the BLC support you further in your work?*

To what extent do you currently have a dialog about teaching with other lecturers/language coordinators in your department or those in other departments?

Would you find it useful to meet regularly with other lecturers and/or language program coordinators?

If so, what topics would you like to discuss at these meetings (e.g., developing a teaching portfolio, assessing teaching and learning, developing communicative activities, teaching literary texts, etc.)?

Would you be interested in participating in a peer observation program with a colleague or in having yourself videotaped in the classroom?

Do you subscribe to the BLC e-mail list? If so, is there any function that this list could serve that it is not currently serving?

Would you be interested in being on an e-mail discussion list for lecturers in foreign languages and/or language coordinators and/or GSI supervisors?

What suggestions do you have for how the BLC can assist you further in your teaching?

**Please feel free to add any comments on teaching foreign languages at Berkeley that you would like to bring to our attention.**

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this questionnaire.

## Appendix 2

### **Languages Reported in BLC Survey**

Afrikaans, Arabic, Chinese, Danish, Dutch, English, French, German, Hebrew, Hindi, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Norwegian, Pali, Prakrit, Punjabi, Russian, Sanskrit, Spanish, Swedish, Tagalog, Tamil, Turkish, Urdu, Veda, Vietnamese, Welsh

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(VanPatten 1993)

Benseler and Cronjaeger (1991) provide the first comprehensive listing on the topic of TA development in foreign languages in their extensive bibliography.

Although exhortations to the contrary are easily found (Allwright 1981), the textbook, particularly the introductory textbook . . .

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(Byrnes 1990, p. 42)

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(Weinberg 1952, 2: p. 129)

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(Smith, Jones, and North 1993)

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(Mitchell et al., Writing Space, 1992)

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(Smith 1991, p. 6; Jones 1992; Light 1990, pp. 72–74)

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  - b. within each group, organize by date (oldest first)
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Clément, Richard. 1980. Ethnicity, Contact and Communicative Competence in a Second Language. *In Language: Social Psychological Perspectives*, edited by H. Giles, W. P. Robinson, and P. M. Smith, 147–54. Oxford: Pergamon.

Clément, Richard, and Bastian G. Kruidenier. 1983. Orientations on Second Language Acquisition: 1. The Effects of Ethnicity, Milieu, and Their Target Language on Their Emergence. *Language Learning* 33: 273–91.

———. 1985. Aptitude, Attitude, and Motivation in Second Language Proficiency: A Test of Clément's Model. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology* 4: 21–37.

Clément, Richard, Zoltán Dörnyei, and Kimberly A. Noels. Submitted for publication. Motivation, Self-Confidence, and Group Cohesion in the Foreign Language Classroom.

### Three-em Dashes (———) for Repeated Names:

Do not use when a coauthor is first added. If the same author is used again, add 3-em.

Dörnyei, Zoltán. 1990a. Analysis of Motivation Components in Foreign Language Learning. Paper presented at the Ninth World Congress of Applied Linguistics, Greece.

———. 1990b. Conceptualizing Motivation in Foreign-Language Learning. *Language Learning* 40: 45–78.

Dörnyei, Zoltán, and Sarah Thurrell. 1992. *Conversation and Dialogues in Action*. Hemel Hempstead: Prentice-Hall.

———. 1994. Teaching Conversational Skills Intensively: Course Content and Rationale. *ELT Journal* 48: 40–49.

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**Journal Article: One Author (16.104)**

Note that identification of the issue is used *only* when each issue is paginated separately (in contrast to the common practice of consecutive pagination throughout a volume).

Lange, Dale. 1986. The MLA Commission of Foreign Languages, Literatures, and Linguistics: Comments and Advice. *ADFL Bulletin* 17: 28–31.

**Journal Article: Two or More Authors (16.104)**

Allen, Wendy, Keith Anderson, and Léon Narváez. 1992. Foreign Languages Across the Curriculum: The Applied Foreign Language Component. *Foreign Language Annals* 25: 11–19.

**Organizations, Associations, or Corporations (16.52)**

If a publication issued by an organization bears no personal author's name on the title page, it should be listed by the organization, even if the name is repeated in the title or in the series title or as the publisher.

American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. 1986. *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines*. Hastings-on-Hudson, NY: ACTFL.

**Edited Book (16.46):**

Byrnes, Heidi, and Michael Canale, eds. 1987. *Defining and Developing Proficiency: Guidelines, Implementations, and Concepts*. Lincolnwood, IL: National Textbook.

**Article in an Edited Book**

James, Dorothy. 1989. Reshaping the "College-Level" Curriculum: Problems and Possibilities. In *Shaping the Future: Challenges and Opportunities*, edited by Helen S. Lepke, 79–110. Burlington, VT: Northeast Conference.

**Book in a Series (16.86)**

Magnan, Sally Sieloff, ed. 1991. *Challenges in the 1990s for College Foreign Language Programs*. AAUSC Issues in Language Program Direction. Boston: Heinle & Heinle Publishers.



Johnson, Carl L. 1944. *Professor Longfellow at Harvard*. Studies in Literature and Philology, vol. 5. Eugene: University of Oregon Press.

### **Article in Edited Book that Is Part of a Series**

Lee, James F., and Bill VanPatten. 1991. The Question of Language Program Direction Is Academic. In *Challenges in the 1990s for College Foreign Language Programs*, edited by Sally Sieloff Magnan, 113–27. AAUSC Issues in Language Program Direction. Boston: Heinle & Heinle Publishers.

### **An Edition (16.79)**

Pedhazur, Elazar J. 1982. *Multiple Regression Behavioral Research: Explanation and Prediction*. 2d ed. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.

### **Publisher's Information Implies a Special Publishing Division**

Light, Richard J. 1992. *Harvard Assessment Seminars Second Report*. Cambridge: Harvard University, Graduate School of Education.

### **Unpublished Thesis (16.132, if published see below)**

Tucker, Holly. 1994. *Echo in the Text: Rewriting in Charles Sorel's Berger Extravagant*. Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison.

### **Published Thesis (16.96 if microform; treat as normal book if otherwise. Note use of italics.)**

Jones, Mildred. 1962. *Il Pastor Fido: Sheep and Their Shepherds*. Chicago: University Microforms.

### **Papers Read at a Meeting (16.133)**

Magnan, Sally Sieloff. 1990. Preparing Inexperienced TAs for Second-Year Courses: Are Our Orientations and Methods Courses Adequate? Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, Nashville.

**Forthcoming or In press (16.57)**

Knight, Susan. Forthcoming. Dictionary: The Tool of Last Resort in Foreign Language Reading. A New Perspective. *Modern Language Journal*.

Waldman, Lila. In press. Bilingual Administrative Support Personnel in United States Corporations. *Modern Language Journal* 78.

**ERIC Docs**

Rubin, Joan, and Irene Thompson. 1992. Material Selection in Strategy Instruction for Russian Listening Comprehension. ERIC Doc. No. ED349796.

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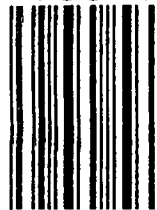
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