The Texas Language Center began Spring 2014 with a continuation of its focus on bridging the gap between proficiency and technology in creating hybrid courses and “flipped” classrooms. Last fall featured technological innovation ranging from the use of integrated video in Intensive Second-Year Italian, to the programmatic incorporation of social media in less-commonly taught languages. Our monthly “Language Matters” brown bag featured language specialists demonstrating their own best practices in teaching and promoting languages as diverse as Turkish, Spanish, and German, and the TLC co-sponsored and contributed to events and conferences organized by the Center for Open Educational Resources in Language Learning (COERLL), the Program in Comparative Literature, Germanic Studies, the Program in Foreign Language Education, and the Center for European Studies.

The spring agenda for the TLC promises to be no less robust, with workshops on current projects for online course-ware in Russian, Persian, and French highlighting successful projects for hybrid and flipped language classes on our campus. Presenters and UT Ph.D.s Marina Potoplyak, Blake Atwood, and Nancy Guilloteau all have had direct involvement in preparing and teaching in these classes. Our Language Matters series this term features the incorporation of interactive technology and modified classrooms in presentations focusing on the teaching of French, German, and Arabic. These sessions, like nearly all TLC events, are open to the public and all language teachers and students, and are always geared to demonstrating best practices—applicable across all languages.

Of special note this fall are the annual TexFLEC conference, again co-sponsored and organized through the TLC, whose theme this year is “Shaping the Future of Foreign/Second Language Education to Cross Cultural Boundaries: Integrating Theory and Practice,” and a special session organized and presented by the TLC at this spring’s Explore UT open house, called “Global Voices: Songs and Tales from around the World.” This session features bilingual presentations of songs, poems, and tales in seven of our world languages: Persian, Czech, Yoruba, Spanish, Russian, Turkish, and Portuguese all preformed by UT instructors and students.

In other news, the TLC and the University of Texas at Austin have been selected to host the newly formed Partners in...
Calendar of Events

Spring 2014

Jan. 22  Language Matters Series:  
*Enchancing Foreign Language Learning with Internet Activities: Intermediate French Cultural Materials*  
Clare Perry, Department of French & Italian, UT Austin  
noon–1:00pm  Texas Union Sinclair Suite, UNB 3.128

Feb. 1  *Text, Teacher, Tech: Creating Hybrid/Blended Language Classes at UT*  
Blake Atwood, Department of Middle Eastern Studies; Nancy Guilloteau, Department of French & Italian; and Marina Potoplyak, Department of Slavic & Eurasian Studies  
10:00am–3:00pm  CLA 3.102B, Glickman Conference Center

Feb. 3  *When the FrameNet Suit Does Not Fit the Swedish Language*  
Karin Friberg Heppin, Department of Swedish, University of Gothenburg  
3:30pm–4:30pm  BUR 337

Feb. 6  *Using FrameNets for Language Teaching and Learning - Don’t say you will walk to Hawaii*  
Karin Friberg Heppin, Department of Swedish, University of Gothenburg  
4:00pm–5:00pm  BUR 337

Keynote speakers: Dwight Atkinson, Purdue University; Victoria Sardegna, The University of Texas at Austin; and Thomas J. Garza, The University of Texas at Austin  
For more information, see the website: [http://links.utexas.edu/bkcbytys](http://links.utexas.edu/bkcbytys)

Feb. 19  Language Matters Series:  
*How Far Can Autonomy Go? Implementing Learning Stations in Language Classrooms*  
David Huenlich, Department of Germanic Studies, UT Austin  
noon–1:00pm  Texas Union Eastwoods Room, UNB 2.128

Mar. 1  Explore UT:  
*Global Voices: Songs and Tales from Around the World*  
Foreign language faculty, UT Austin  
11:00am–11:40am  MEZ 2.102

Mar. 6  *Enemies of the State: Pussy Riot and the New Russian Protest Culture*  
Artemy Troitsky, celebrated Russian activist, cultural critic, university lecturer, and journalist  
12:30pm  Avaya Auditorium, POB 2.302

Mar. 19  Language Matters Series:  
*ClicaBrasil: Using Technology to Teach Language and Culture in the Classroom*  
Vivian Flanzer, Department of Spanish & Portuguese, UT Austin  
noon–1:00pm  Texas Union Sinclair Suite, UNB 3.128

Apr. 16  Language Matters Series:  
*Culture Awareness and Language Proficiency through Movie Trailers in the Beginner Classroom*  
Emilie Destruel Johnson and Céline Gaillard, the University of Iowa  
noon–1:00pm  Texas Union Sinclair Suite, UNB 3.128

For more information about these events and any updates and additions to the calendar, please visit [www.utexas.edu/cola/centers/tlc/](http://www.utexas.edu/cola/centers/tlc/)
Mind the Gap: Creating Supplemental Activity Sets Using Culturally Relevant Sources
Holly Brining

As every foreign language instructor knows, there is no such thing as a perfect textbook. Certainly, some may provide better sequencing or more precise grammar explanations than others, but it would be unrealistic to expect a textbook marketed to many different types of programs to fulfill every instructor’s desire. The basic language program in the Department of Germanic Studies at the University of Texas at Austin currently utilizes Deutsch: Na Klar! in the first two language courses of the sequence. Deutsch: Na Klar! is a fine book that provides clear explanations, a plethora of activities to complete either in class or at home, and a reasonable amount of listening activities. This piece is not, however, an extended advertisement for what is generally a decent resource for learning and teaching German. As I have stated in the beginning, there is no such thing as a perfect textbook, and Deutsch: Na Klar! is not an exception to this rule. One of the textbook’s primary faults is the lack of cohesion between the “cultural information” and the rest of the content within the specific chapters. Sure, the chapter’s theme is at least tenuously related to the cultural content, but that content itself remains underdeveloped. The instructor’s task is then to add some bulk to the cultural elements and integrate them logically and efficiently into the rest of the chapter.

When I last taught the second course in this sequence, I became acutely aware of the need to create such materials. For example, the seventh chapter of Deutsch: Na Klar! covers the themes of sports, free time, and weather. The designated cultural sections in this chapter consist of three short texts that explain Fahrenheit to Celsius conversion, Germans’ fascination the Wild West, and popular free time activities in German speaking countries. None of these texts are highly interesting or informative, and they also do not demand much input or critical thinking from the learner. I subsequently decided to develop activity sets based on culturally and thematically relevant information that would enable the students to practice as many of the modalities as possible.

For the seventh chapter, I chose to use the lyrics and official video for the 2010 hit Schland O Schland from the pop group Uwu Lena. The song and video thematize Germany’s participation in the 2010 World Cup in South Africa. The three part activity set I created combines elements of reading, listening, writing, and speaking so that the students get a full workout within a short period of time. Before viewing the video, the students are asked to describe what they see and then hypothesize what the song might actually be about. The second time, they receive the lyrics and fill in key words that have been removed from the text in order to practice listening comprehension. After these viewings, the students work in pairs to answer a series of questions about the song. These questions ask them to characterize the music and the lyrics using adjectives, enabling them to utilize vocabulary they have already learned. They are also required to think about Germans’ relationship to soccer, and how this might compare to their own relationships to certain sports.

The goal of such an activity set is to provide the students with the opportunity to practice their language skills in different ways while drawing upon culturally rich materials. This is something that many (most?) textbooks lack, and it is up to the instructors to fill this gap. Creating such activities can be time consuming and result in many hours of extra work. Fortunately, the Texas Language Center offers financial support for such projects in the form of the Professional Development Awards. These awards present a unique opportunity for instructors to receive extra funding for the development of materials and other projects that benefit the quality of instruction at The University of Texas at Austin.

Holly Brining is a PhD candidate and an Assistant Instructor in the Department of Germanic Studies.
Autonomy in the Classroom: On Implementing Learning Stations for Language Learning

David Huenlich

A peek through the narrow window of a Jester classroom door reveals the following picture: there are about 12 clusters of chairs and desks in the room. Students are sitting in groups of two or three working silently or discussing pictures displayed on a table. Two of them have plugged into a laptop and are jotting down notes as they follow a recording attentively. The teacher is circulating from group to group, rendering assistance where needed, but she is spending most of her time in quiet observation. The atmosphere is calm and concentrated, even when some students are in motion: a few are momentarily shifting to another cluster of chairs, where they resume a new task, and at the far end of the room, two students are engaged in a match on a table top soccer set—it appears they are quizzing each other at each scored goal.

What we cannot see from the window is that all members of this classroom are German 612 students, who have mentally traveled 5,500 miles to Munich, Germany, and are now simultaneously exploring aspects of the city’s life: the culture of brotzeit and beer gardens, Munich’s history as the Bavarian capital, and the Bayern-München soccer success story, but they also explore current social issues such as gentrification or the trend of staging weddings only after children are born. All of these topics, organized in work stations, follow the general design of their textbook, Stationen, and takes the students on a round trip to several major German cities throughout the semester.

As with prior implementations of learning stations in language classrooms, the experience in Fall 2013 in German 612 was overall positive. However, some reflection is due as to why the approach is the exception rather than the norm. Tracing back to Maria Montessori’s thoughts on “discipline through liberty,” a hundred years later we use the terms of “learner autonomy” and “motivation” when grappling with similar questions: How much autonomy should a teacher give to students? Does motivation increase through autonomous work? What role does the teacher play?

Montessori predicts that even the gifted teacher “cannot understand that her new task is apparently passive” (88, emphasis original), and the predication seems to hold, since even in the age of “learner-centeredness” only few teachers passively sit back while letting students manage their own learning in the classroom.

What are the reasons for hesitation? Are there perhaps inherent problems with the learner-centered and autonomous approaches, especially in language teaching? A recurrent problem with the “stations” approach, for instance, is that it caters to dynamic students with communicative skills and provides them with a choice of complex texts and natural speech recordings, while students with a propensity for structure find themselves challenged and uncomfortable. Straddling this divide, the Fall 2013 German 612 students were provided a compromise between free choice and more traditional forms of accountability.

These and other challenges and benefits will be the topic of my Language Matters talk on February 19th. I designed most of the stations for German 612 and practiced the approach in the past. If you miss the presentation, it will be available online in the Resources section of the TLC’s website.

David Huenlich is a PhD candidate and an Assistant Instructor in the Department of Germanic Studies.
The ACTFL-OPI: Practical Applications for Heritage Speakers

Eliseo Jacob

ACTFL’s Oral Proficiency Interview, a standard tool used by foreign language educators, government institutions and the private sector, evaluates an individual’s spoken language ability in a specific target language. The OPI offers clear markers of ability level in the target language, and it can be applied as an additional pedagogical tool to assess students’ oral language skills. While the OPI is an effective performance test to measure global tasks and functions in relation to speaking, limitations exist in regards to its capacity to effectively rate heritage speakers’ use of their family’s language of origin.

During the summer of 2013, I attended the ACTFL OPI workshop for Spanish at Middlebury College. The OPI training provides a standardized rubric, which outlines clear expectations of what functions and tasks a student needs to perform adequately in the target language in order to reach a certain level of proficiency. During the many discussions among the attendees following the rating of sample interviews, one particular issue stood out to me as a foreign language instructor: how do heritage speakers fit into guidelines aimed at non-native speakers learning in a classroom setting?

As an instructor in a state with a large population of heritage Spanish speakers, I have concerns that the interview is designed to primarily evaluate and rate L2 learners. Heritage students can become frustrated with curriculum and rubrics that make them appear inadequate in a language tied to their ethnic identity. This does not mean that they do not need further foreign language instruction, but rather, instructors and pedagogical materials need to acknowledge differences between heritage and L2 learners. The OPI trainer at the workshop I attended emphasized that the OPI does not account for the unique linguistic circumstances of heritage speakers. Conducted more than two decades ago, Valdés’ study on the validity of the OPI test for Hispanic bilinguals raises a question still relevant today: “Will testers be trained to be sensitive to regional and social dialect differences that do not, in fact, interfere with communication between native speakers, or will they tend to see dialect differences as patterned errors?” (1989). Recent studies have examined the effectiveness of the OPI to rate and place heritage speakers in foreign language programs (Cho 2004; Kagan and Friedman 2003). While these studies recommend the use of the OPI to evaluate heritage speakers, they recognize that OPI testers need to be sensitive to the unique linguistic features of these specific population groups. An adaptive approach will allow the tester to avoid the pitfall of underrating or overrating the heritage speaker’s actual linguistic level due to unfamiliarity with speech patterns that do not strictly follow ACTFL’s proficiency guidelines due to regional or dialectal variances.

I would like to thank the TLC and the Department of Spanish & Portuguese for providing me with the funding to attend the ACTFL OPI workshop at Middlebury College.


Eliseo Jacob is a PhD candidate and an Assistant Instructor in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese.
Using Movie Trailers in Beginner French Classes
Emilie Destruel Johnson and Céline Gaillard

Culture has often been considered as a fifth skill, and in most beginner classrooms, teachers tend to focus on achievement and informational culture instead of behavioral culture. Consequently, students do not develop intercultural competence and are not as prepared as they could be to interact with native speakers of the target culture. To teach those skills to students in addition of teaching them the target language can be seen as time-consuming and difficult, especially in the introductory classes. However, we believe instructors can teach both culture and language at the same time, no matter the proficiency level of the learners. To do so, we have developed material based on French movie trailers for a first-semester French class.

Each worksheet has the same format, and is based on one chapter in the textbook as well as one movie trailer. The pre-viewing activities help students anticipate content and activate background knowledge, whether it be grammatical, lexical, or cultural. Students then watch the video in class, after which they complete activities aimed at assessing their listening comprehension as well as other activities aimed at making them practice the grammar learned in the chapter. Those activities can require them to write or to speak with a partner. After those language-based activities, a final activity requires students to reflect on the target culture as well as their own.

This format has many benefits in the classroom. First, students are motivated when they watch videos of recent, popular French movies. Moreover, they can practice their language skills during activities based on authentic input, which helps the teacher use time efficiently in class. Videos also enable students to see non-verbal behavior, which is not possible in other formats of input. Most importantly, the questions in the last, cultural activity guide the learners in their reflection about cultures. They are required to reflect on what they have seen in a very short video and to analyze it. The discussion can stay focused as it is led by the teacher.

This type of input and reflection led by the teacher can help students develop the necessary skills to analyze their own behavior as well as others’. Doing so will prepare them to have their own interactions with the target culture, not only because they will already have developed their own knowledge about the target culture, but because they will have previously learned to analyze input in a culturally appropriate way (as taught by the teacher). Therefore, when they interact with a native, for instance, they will be more likely to recognize cultural differences without judging them. Instead, they will try to understand that difference because they will have developed the curiosity and the skill to discuss culture in class.

Dr. Emile Destruel Johnson is a recent UT-Austin graduate and is now Assistant Professor of French Linguistics at the University of Iowa.

Céline Gaillard is graduate student in Foreign Language Acquisition, Research and Education (FLARE) program at the University of Iowa.
Spring 2014

ABAAL PORTLAND 2014
March 22 - 25, 2014
www.aaal.org

The American Association of Applied Linguistics (AAAL) is a professional organization of scholars, who actively contribute to the multidisciplinary field of applied linguistics.

Like us on Facebook

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South Central Assn for Language Learning Technology

www.socalit.org

Beyond the Classroom: Language Learning From Local To Global

March 13-15, 2014
Louisiana State University
Baton Rouge, LA

TESOL 2014
International Convention
& English Language Expo

www.tesol.org

26-29 March 2014 ~ Portland, Oregon

Fourth International Conference on the Development and Assessment of Intercultural Competence

“Preparing and Supporting K-16 Language Teachers to Teach for Intercultural Competence in and beyond the Classroom”

January 23-26, 2014, Tuscon, Arizona
cercl.arizona.edu/development/conferences/2014_icc

REACHING NEW HEIGHTS THROUGH PROFICIENCY
joint conference of the Southwest Conference on Language Teaching (SWCOLT) and the Utah Foreign Language Association (UFLA)

April 24-26, 2014
SNOWBIRD, UTAH

Plenary Speaker: JOHN DE MADO
From Mastery to Proficiency: Shifting the Paradigm

www.swcolt.org/conferences.htm

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Area Opportunities

CALICO
Conference Computer Assisted Language Instruction Consortium

OPEN, ONLINE, MASSIVE: THE FUTURE OF LANGUAGE LEARNING?

MAY 6-10, 2014
Hosted by the University of Ohio, Athens
www.calico.org

The American Association of Applied Linguistics (AAAL) is a professional organization of scholars, who actively contribute to the multidisciplinary field of applied linguistics.
Languages in the U.S. (PLUS) organization beginning later this spring, PLUS was created following a meeting of more than forty Language Flagship programs and other innovative language programs from across the country at the University last November. The mission of the new membership organization is “PLUS is a nonprofit, member-based organization that represents and serves US-based world language programs and their institutions. PLUS assures the highest standards in teaching and learning to advance the use of languages at the professional level.” The TLC’s role towards this mission will be to house the organization as it builds its membership and begins the process of accrediting national language programs across the country seeking to be certified as successful in “transforming learners into global professionals through the achievement and maintenance of the highest levels of language proficiency.”

The positioning of PLUS within the TLC will draw on our ability to organize and offer professional development and curricular modification workshops.

As always, the success of the TLC and all of its annual events and presentations depends on the active participation of the myriad of faculty, students, graduate Assistant Instructors, and teachers from around the state to have an impact on language teaching and curricula. On behalf of the Texas Language Center I extend my sincere thanks to all of you who continue to support these efforts and invite others to join us in our continuing effort to articulate our mantra: “Language Matters!”

Dr. Thomas J. Garza is the Texas Language Center Director and University Distinguished Teaching Associate Professor in the Department of Slavic & Eurasian Studies.

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**TLC Up Close, Continued from page 1**

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**Language Matters!**

Join the TLC this Spring for our monthly teacher-oriented presentation series from noon to 1pm on Wednesdays in the Texas Union, featuring these exciting topics:

- **Jan 22**—Enhancing Foreign Language Learning with Internet Activities: Intermediate French Cultural Materials with Clare Perry, Sinclair Suite, UNB 3.128
- **Feb 19**—How Far Can Autonomy Go? Implementing Learning Stations in Language Classrooms with David Huenlich, Eastwoods Room, UNB 2.102
- **Mar 19**—ClicaBrasil: Using Technology to Teach Language and Culture in the Classroom with Vivian Flanzer, Sinclair Suite, UNB 3.128
- **Apr 16**—Culture Awareness and Language Proficiency through Movie Trailers in the Beginner Classroom with Emilie Destrue Johnson and Céline Gallaird, Sinclair Suite, UNB 3.128

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