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# Dialog on Language Instruction

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## **Using Authentic Audio in Dictogloss Activities**

**Mark J. Waltermire**

*European and Latin American School*

Research in Second Language Acquisition has demonstrated the effectiveness of using authentic materials in the classroom (e.g. Duquette, Dunnett, & Papalia, 1987; Peacock, 1997; Thanajaro, 2000; Valdman, 1992). Though many definitions of authentic materials have been proposed (Duquette, Dunnett, & Papalia, 1987; Harmer, 1983, p. 146; Lee, 1995; Nunan, 1988, pp. 99-102, 1989, p. 54; Rings, 1986; Taylor, 1994; Widdowson, 1978, 1990; Willis, 1998), an especially succinct and useful definition is that of Nunan (1989), who defines authentic materials as “any material which has not been specifically produced for the purposes of language teaching” (p. 54).<sup>1</sup> Authentic audio materials include spoken narratives, conversations, interviews, speeches, news broadcasts, advertisements, songs, poetry recitations, stories, movies, and television programs. Authentic texts include letters, stories, poems, news articles, brochures, e-mail correspondence, diary entries, labels, signs, and comic strips (see Larimer & Schleicher, 1999). Essentially, any of these materials can be considered authentic if they are not adapted in any way. The current study’s focus lies solely on the use of authentic audio materials in language teaching and, more specifically, the incorporation of authentic audio accessed from the internet into dictogloss activities.

Since the level of linguistic sophistication of authentic audio materials varies greatly, language instructors should select passages with students’ abilities in mind. If an overly challenging or complex audio passage is selected for use in the classroom, students may become frustrated and linguistically insecure. Though many authentic materials may be too advanced for beginning learners, the use of authentic materials should be introduced in a language course as early as possible. After all, “[t]here is little point in learners studying language that is unnatural or untypical of the language they will meet in real life” (Willis, 1998, p. 46). Several of the authentic materials previously mentioned might be more suitable for beginning language learners since they are generally less complex linguistically than other sources. Basic level authentic texts, such as signs, brochures, and labels, are extremely common and merely have to be selected wisely by the language educator in accordance with the level of his or her students. However, finding beginning level authentic audio materials is much more difficult, though not impossible. Therefore, it may be necessary for educators to wait until learners are ready before authentic audio materials are used in the classroom. Following Tomlinson (1998),

Readiness can be achieved by materials which create situations requiring the use of variational features not previously taught, by materials which ensure that the learners have gained sufficient mastery over the developmental features of the previous stage before teaching a new one and by materials which roughly tune the input so that it contains some features which are slightly above each learner’s current state of proficiency. (p. 12)

Of course, with authentic materials the input cannot be “tuned”, but rather selected in such a way as to include features which learners will be able to comprehend.

Historically, the use of non-authentic materials in language instruction has been much more common than the use of authentic materials. Though non-authentic materials are not without their merits, especially for beginning language learners, denying learners exposure to authentic linguistic input will inevitably lead to limited, artificial production. It may be true that many language learners will encounter authentic language outside of the classroom setting and will gradually adjust their production/comprehension to more accurately reflect that of native speakers. However, why not expose learners to authentic language earlier? In this way, learners are much better equipped to function in real-life communicative scenarios. By being exposed to authentic auditory input, learners are exposed to native speaker discourse strategies that are generally removed from audio materials adapted for the purposes of instruction (Carter, Hughes, & McCarthy, 1998; Porter & Roberts, 1981). A variety of rich discourse features, such as pauses, discourse markers, intonation, stress, speech rate, and articulatory features are sacrificed for the sake of comprehensibility when, in fact, the removal of such features may not only make comprehension more difficult but also denies learners exposure to them.

Another significant advantage of using authentic materials in the language classroom is that they are generally more interesting than non-authentic materials because they more accurately reflect the target language culture.<sup>2</sup> Listening to an authentic news broadcast is perhaps more engaging to most learners than listening to a pre-scripted imitation that has been simplified for the purpose of instruction, although, again, student interest seems to depend more on the material’s content rather than on its authenticity. Instructors should choose materials that are of interest to their students (which can be easily assessed by way of a written questionnaire during the first week of instruction). The affective impact that authentic materials have on learners is two-fold. First, the more dynamic nature of these materials more readily engages learners in more attentive participation. Since authentic materials serve a larger purpose for native speakers in general, their validity as a learning tool is instantly recognized by learners, who, as a result, view classroom activities as more meaningful. Also, when learners realize that they are able to process authentic language, their confidence increases.

### **Digital Sources of Authentic Audio and their Pedagogical Applications**

A wide variety of authentic audio materials can be found on the internet. Many of these files, however, can only be streamed (which is to say that they cannot be downloaded) and will require the use of a computer in the classroom.<sup>3</sup> Aside from websites that show audiovisual materials exclusively, such as youtube.com, there are multiple news websites that include video. Appendix A features a list of some of these sites, which are all free and include authentic videos. If necessary, the video portion can be reduced so as to make the file ‘audio only’. Videos can be played as many times as needed and include pause, rewind, fast forward, and volume options. Though the sites listed in Appendix A are all in Spanish, a comprehensive media website that allows for the access of news sites in multiple world languages can be found at [www.webnpage.com/language/media.html](http://www.webnpage.com/language/media.html). Also, an extremely useful database of podcasts (essentially an MP3 file which automatically downloads to one’s computer every week) in nearly 20 languages can be found at [www.podcast.net/cat/89](http://www.podcast.net/cat/89).

A variety of activities using authentic audio clips can be incorporated into language classes. The most traditional audio comprehension activity is question-and-answer. This activity proves very useful with students of varying abilities since questions can range from the most basic (i.e. topic of passage, sequence of events, essential elements of information, etc.) to much more advanced (i.e. meaning of figurative language, interpretation of opinions, implications of events, etc.). Another common audio activity is transcription (either partial or full), which seems beneficial to word recognition and the discovery of articulation patterns (Davis & Rinvoluceri, 1988). The main problem with each of these activities, however, is that learners are generally not engaged with one another and therefore have fewer opportunities to produce the target language.

There are several interactive tasks that can be utilized in order to circumvent deficiencies related to traditional audio comprehension activities. For example, learners can listen to an incomplete audio passage and then, with a partner, predict how the passage will end (and perhaps try to mimic the source material speakers). Another possible audio activity involves the comparison of two similar audio clips by small groups of students. By comparing two distinct yet similar audio clips, learners are able to develop critical thinking skills. Two-way information gap tasks, “which require the exchange of information among all participants, each of whom possesses some piece of information [...] needed by all other participants to solve [a] problem”, are also very useful for audio comprehension practice (Doughty & Pica, 1986, p. 307). For example, one group of students listens to the first half of an audio clip while the other group of students listens to the second half of the clip. The different groups must then ask each other questions in order to collect information that they need but do not have. Finally, an activity that I have devised for use in my classes that seems to work particularly well at motivating student interest while sharpening analytical skills involves students finding authentic audio clips on the internet and then devising three to five questions based on what they have heard. They then minimize the audio source and change seats with a fellow student in order to listen to a new audio passage and answer questions related to it. After discussing each other’s answers, students naturally enter into free conversation based on a variety of different topics that they have generated for themselves.

Most of the audio comprehension activities such as the ones just described involve extensive preparation on the part of the language instructor. There are websites, however, such as SCOLA ([www.scola.org](http://www.scola.org)), El Mensual ([www.bbc.co.uk/languages/spanish/news/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/languages/spanish/news/)), and GLOSS ([www.lingnet.org](http://www.lingnet.org)) that offer listening comprehension exercises based on authentic audio materials. For the most part, these exercises appear to have been designed for the individual learner and, for this reason, seem more suitable for use outside of the classroom. Of course, the audio portion of exercises alone could be used as a basis for some of the activities just described. SCOLA exercises make use of audiovisual clips in over 25 languages from television stations around the world. Each exercise (referred to as “Insta-class Lessons”) includes a written transcript of the audio clip, its translation, and a corresponding quiz. El Mensual, an online audio magazine in Spanish, allows users to select audio files by topic or grammatical point.<sup>4</sup> Learning activities include a variety of different types of quizzes, along with written transcripts of audio passages. The Department of Defense has also developed an on-line audio learning tool referred to as GLOSS (Global Language Online Support System) that is used frequently by faculty and students at the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center (DLIFLC) in Monterey, California. GLOSS consists of authentic audio materials for 15 languages (Albanian, Arabic, Chinese, Croatian, Dari, Greek, Hebrew, Hindi,

Indonesian, Korean, Kurdish, Persian, Russian, Serbian, and Spanish) that can be used with learners of varying skill levels (2, 2+, 3, and 3+/-4).<sup>5</sup> Activities are categorized by linguistic focus (structural, lexical, and discourse) and topic (including society, security, environment, politics, culture, economy, geography, and science). Students check their comprehension of audio through a variety of exercises such as multiple choice and short answer questions, partial transcription, comparison of similar broadcasts, etc. Additionally, each GLOSS activity includes an answer key, alternate audio, a glossary, teacher's notes, and a complete written transcript of each audio clip.

### **Dictogloss**

One way in which the use of authentic digitized materials can effectively improve second language learners' audio comprehension abilities is through the use of dictogloss, an integrated-skills, task-based activity in which students reconstruct a dictated passage through collaboration (Jacobs & Small, 2003; Nunan, 1991, pp. 28-9; Wajnryb, 1990). Following Nunan (1991), dictogloss activities involve the following four stages:

#### *Preparation*

At this stage, teachers prepare students for the text they will be hearing by asking questions and discussing a stimulus picture, by discussing vocabulary, by ensuring that students know what they are supposed to do, and by ensuring that the students are in the appropriate groups.

#### *Dictation*

Learners hear the dictation twice. The first time, they listen only and get a general feeling for the text. The second time they take down notes, being encouraged to listen for content words which will assist them in reconstructing the text. For reasons of consistency, it is preferable that students listen to a cassette recording rather than teacher-read text.

#### *Reconstruction*

At the conclusion of the dictation, learners pool notes and produce their version of the text. During this stage it is important that the teacher does not provide any language input.

#### *Analysis and correction*

There are various ways of dealing with this stage. The small group versions can be reproduced on the board or overhead projector, the texts can be photocopied and distributed, or the students can compare their version with the original, sentence by sentence (pg. 28).

The procedural description just outlined clearly shows that "dictogloss represents a major shift from traditional dictation. When implemented conscientiously, dictogloss embodies sound principles of language teaching which include: learner autonomy, cooperation among learners, curricular integration, focus on meaning, diversity, thinking skills, alternative assessment, and teachers as co-learners" (Jacobs & Small, 2003, p. 2).

A variation of this activity, which makes use of authentic audio materials derived from the digital sources discussed previously (i.e. podcasts, streaming video and audio, and audiovisual clips), demands even more of learners. The language they hear is delivered considerably faster than that of a traditional dictation and usually contains much denser language. Even more so than with dictated text, by working with authentic



audio material “learners are in a position where they lack enough data to reproduce with ease the text to which they have been exposed ... They are therefore obliged to call on their pre-existing knowledge of language – their grammatical competence – to see them through the task” (Wajnryb, 1990, p. 12). Now we will focus on more specific differences between traditional dictogloss activities and dictogloss activities which utilize authentic audio materials. Ideally, dictogloss activities using authentic audio should be carried out according to the following procedure:

*Activate Schemata*

Students brainstorm ideas/vocabulary related to a visual stimulus related to the audio clip they will hear during the lesson. This activates learners’ previous knowledge of a specific topic, which will consequently strengthen the new linguistic input they receive.

*Listen for Essential Information*

Students listen to an authentic audio clip from the internet (according to the proficiency level and subject deemed appropriate by the instructor) and are encouraged to take notes on essential information.

*Students Formulate Questions*

Each student formulates three questions based on the audio passage in order to strengthen analytical skills. Then students ask a classmate the questions and conversation is pursued by the professor.

*Listen for Details*

Students are then told that they will be competing in pairs or small groups. The team that can most accurately reconstruct the audio passage (not word-for-word, of course) will win. They are instructed to write down as many details as possible. Students then listen to the audio passage a second time.

*Negotiation*

In teams, students work together to reconstruct the audio passage on a sheet of paper. They should be careful not to reveal information to the other team.

*Comparative Analysis*

Instructor gathers the teams’ reconstructed audio passages, displays the written gloss for all to see using a Smart Board (or a projector), and, with colored markers, checks off the information listed by each team, comparing them to see which team has the most precise information. The team whose reconstructed audio passage most closely approximates that of the original gloss wins the “game”.

The use of authentic materials in a dictogloss lesson provides learners with real-world themes which can be used for further exploration in authentic follow-up tasks. A variety of follow-up activities can be used in order to more fully integrate linguistic skills through further student interaction, such as: a) a role-play scenario involving participants similar to those involved in the audio passage used during the lesson. For example, based on a Spanish-language broadcast about a hostage situation, students would play the roles of the kidnapper and hostage negotiator (in pairs) or the kidnapper, the hostage, a relative of the hostage, and the hostage negotiator (in groups of four), b) debate (if the audio

passage involves controversial issues), and c) the elaboration of strategies/procedures to solve a problem. For example, given a news broadcast detailing a fire in a Paraguayan supermarket, teams could devise exit strategies, rescue plans, etc. For a possible lesson plan including the role-play activity just mentioned, refer to Appendix B.

### **The Pedagogical Strengths of a Dictogloss Lesson**

The use of dictogloss activities such as those just discussed fulfills a wide variety of current SLA methodological imperatives. First of all, dictogloss activities are almost completely student-centered, with the instructor serving as a true facilitator. When one considers the steps of a dictogloss lesson proposed above, it becomes clear that the focus is never on the instructor, who is only actually involved in the initial and final stages of the lesson (activating schemata and comparing learners' reconstructed audio transcripts with the original, respectively). Even in these phases of the lesson, however, the focus is still centered on either visual images (phase one) or the original audio transcript (phase six). Second, the combination of authentic materials and tasks that require higher order cognitive skills (namely, analysis and synthesis) helps learners to internalize unfamiliar language and concepts that they will encounter in the target culture.

Unlike with traditional audio comprehension activities, during a dictogloss lesson learners do not perform tasks individually. Instead, learners are engaged in communicative, task-based activities that involve pair and/or group work. According to Nunan (1991), "dictogloss exploits the principle that two heads are better than one. Students are able to pool their resources, and even low-level learners are able, through collaborative action, to 'outperform their competence'" (p. 29). The need to collaborate in order to complete the task of reconstructing an authentic audio passage forces learners to negotiate verbally various aspects of a particular passage (i.e. what is important, the order in which information was given, the structures that were used, etc.). According to Wajnryb (1990), learners' "reason for interacting is genuine and not 'display-based' or teacher-constructed. One might argue, in fact, that in this case the interaction may be more important than the result of the interaction" (p. 17).

In addition to using auditory and verbal skills, learners also engage in comparative analysis through reading and listening in dictogloss activities (as the instructor reads their reconstruction and they compare this with the original audio transcript). Through comparison, learners are able to gauge their use of language with that of native speakers and modify this usage whenever necessary (with the instructor's guidance). This is especially true for syntactic structures. Since learners have to reconstruct whole discourse based on discourse fragments during dictogloss activities, they are given the opportunity to experiment with syntactic structures of the target language and compare them with those produced by native speakers. They also give learners the opportunity to induce grammar patterns, which are normally presented as rules in most traditional language textbooks. Grammatical accuracy is extremely important in dictogloss activities since it partially determines who will win the "game" (described in step 6). Though the authentic listening material may not be inherently motivating to learners (due to its content), the desire to win while competing with another group certainly is.

## **The Practical Benefits of a Dictogloss Lesson**

Now that we have discussed the pedagogical aspects of dictogloss activities, we now turn to something that is also of great importance for all language instructors, which are the practical benefits of these activities. Many language professionals realize that much time is spent looking for authentic audio materials, especially since they must be appropriate for learners according to their general ability range. There are a host of problems even once a level-appropriate audio clip has been found, such as the length of the clip, its quality, its subject matter, or the use of infrequent language, regionalisms, or slang. Another concern is that transcribing authentic audio passages is extremely time-consuming. It is true that many language instructors simply do not have enough time to prepare these materials on a consistent basis. Fortunately, two of the internet sites previously mentioned (GLOSS [[www.lingnet.org](http://www.lingnet.org)] and SCOLA [[www.scola.org](http://www.scola.org)]) already contain authentic audio passages with accompanying written transcripts for each passage.

An added feature of GLOSS is that it allows users to search materials of varying ability levels. Websites like SCOLA, which do not have this feature, can still be used with beginners of the language, however. Authentic audio materials can still be used at this level if the instructor either: 1) reads a transcript of the original audio clip or 2) allows for pauses between sentences of a more advanced level clip. Though each of these techniques makes the audio in question only quasi-authentic at best, it could serve as a bridge for using authentic materials later in the course. Dictogloss activities are also helpful to language educators since they serve as an alternative to textbook-based instruction for students at higher levels. In other words, regardless of how useful a given traditional language textbook may be in class, these activities provide variation and allow learners and instructors alike the opportunity to break the routine.

## **Conclusion**

The incorporation of authentic on-line audio materials into classroom activities poses many advantages to both learners and educators. Authentic language is the type of language that most learners will encounter outside of the classroom. Since target language proficiency in real-life contexts is the very aim of most language teaching, it is imperative that language learners be exposed to this language and that they do something with it. A particularly useful audio comprehension activity in which authentic materials can be easily incorporated with little or no work for the language educator is dictogloss. Unlike traditional audio comprehension activities, dictogloss requires learners to interact with one another. Group or pair collaboration encourages the negotiation of meaning, peer repair, and active participation, all as a result of the necessity to complete a group task. Furthermore, by comparing their output to that of native speakers, second language learners achieve greater metalinguistic awareness. Dictogloss activities using authentic audio provide them with opportunities to narrow the gap between their own interlanguage and the native discourse to which they are exposed, thereby allowing for the gradual acquisition of native speaker structures.

## Appendices

### Appendix A

The following internet sites include authentic audiovisual clips in Spanish:

<http://latino.video.msn.com/v/es-us/v.htm>

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/spanish/multimedia/video>

<http://www.elmundo.es/videos/index.html>

<http://es.news.yahoo.com/videos/>

<http://www.clarin.com/>

<http://www.elpais.com/videos/>

<http://www.univision.com/content/content.jhtml?cid=974459>

### Appendix B

#### *Sample Lesson Plan Using Dictogloss*

*Topic:* Hostage negotiation

*Objective:* To become more familiar with hostage negotiation and simulate a hostage negotiation situation.

*Materials:* SmartBoard (photos and audio script); Lingnet GLOSS audio sample “Rehenes” (Level 2, Listening).

*Lead-In:* Students will brainstorm (orally) what they know about hostage situations given a visual stimulus. This will activate schema related to this topic that students already have (**2 min.**).

#### *Task A*

1. We will listen to an actual news broadcast from Voice of America concerning the kidnapping of employees from the Chilean embassy in Costa Rica by an embassy policeman. Students will be encouraged to take notes on essential information (**2 min.**);
2. Each student will formulate three questions based on the audio sample in order to strengthen analytical skills (**2 min.**);
3. In pairs, students will ask each other the questions they have just created and will answer them in order to facilitate listening comprehension (**2 min.**);
4. I tell students that they will now be competing in pairs. The team that can most accurately reconstruct the broadcast (NOT WORD-FOR-WORD) will win. They

will be instructed to write down as much detail from the broadcast as possible. We will then re-listen to the audio sample (**3 min.**);

5. In teams, students work together to reconstruct the news broadcast (by WRITING IT DOWN) (**4 min.**);

6. I gather their reconstructed broadcasts and display the written gloss for all to see. With colored SmartBoard markers, I check off the information listed by each team and compare to see who wins the “game” (**4 min.**).

### Task B

In same pairs, students role-play a hostage situation. One student plays the part of the kidnapper and the other the negotiator. (**5 min.**).

*Follow-Up:* Students are asked (1) if they would like to be hostage negotiators, and (2) why or why not. (Remainder of lesson).

### Notes

1. It should be noted that defining authenticity in multiple realms (i.e. in language, in tasks, or in situations) or differentiating between genuine and authentic instances of language use (Widdowson, 1978, pp. 79-80) will not be explored in this study.

2. Peacock (1997, pp. 150-2) rejects this claim based on impressionistic self-reported data from students involved in his study. Though these data were analyzed statistically and found to be significant, the source of these data is questionable. The students observed during this study were asked to rate authentic materials with regards to how interesting they were irrespective of students’ interests in their content or identification with the target culture. Authentic materials will only pique student interest if they deal with topics that are of great interest to them. Furthermore, if students are intrinsically unmotivated to study the target language or if they do not identify with the target language culture, they will scarcely consider any authentic materials to be interesting.

3. Fortunately, instructors who do not have access to a computer while teaching still have options for finding and using audio files from the internet. Podcasts, which are available for download for free from iTunes, can be saved to a CD-R and played back to students on a standard CD player.

4. The website that administers El Mensual ([www.bbc.co.uk/languages](http://www.bbc.co.uk/languages)) also includes audio comprehension exercises in French, German, Italian, Mandarin, Portuguese, and Greek.

5. These skills levels are defined in the Interagency Linguistic Roundtable Language Skill Level Descriptions ([www.govtilr.org](http://www.govtilr.org)).

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## **Developing a Learner-Centered Curriculum The New Arabic Basic Course**

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*At the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center (DLIFLC), the curricula are periodically updated to reflect the trends in language theory. Typically, a basic course (BC) is used for a number of years before a new one is published. The Institute curricula reflect the basic trends of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), the approach or methodology that has been widely used in the second and foreign language learning field over the past 35 years or so.*

*This article will provide a short overview of the Arabic textbooks published over the past years and used at DLIFLC. Then it will provide a brief literature review before examining the principles underlying the new Arabic Basic Course (ABC). Finally, this article will explore the design of the new ABC reviewing examples that incorporate the latest developments in the field.*

### **Historical Overview of Arabic Textbooks**

For years, the Institute's curriculum designers have focused on innovation. They made several attempts to design a new Arabic curriculum, but fell short of the finalizing projects. Unlike other textbooks, the new ABC is totally produced at DLIFLC, by its own professionals familiar with latest methods of foreign language teaching.

During the time of establishing the Arabic Program in 1947, there were hardly any textbooks in the universities or in the market to teach Arabic. Kamel Said, the founder of the program, used a textbook published in 1920. It was a children's book, "where the cat speaks to the monkey and the mouse tries to save the lion from his trap." Then, it was followed by another old textbook in 1948 for reading and writing only. In 1952, Jacob Shammas, co-founder of the Arabic program prepared a publication for Arabic-spoken Iraqi implementing the "Direct Method".

In 1951, a two-volume textbook of *Literary Arabic and Grammar* was developed by K. Said, and used for 12 years until it was replaced by Shamas's *Basic Course in Modern Standard Arabic*, to last for another 12 years. Initiatives of curriculum change continued, and Abdelmalik's *Modern Standard Arabic* was introduced in 1975. This 120-lesson textbook did not use the communicative approach, rather it was focused on the grammar-structural method, and lasted until 1986 when DLIFLC had to shift gears to commercial textbooks. *Alkitaab Al Asassi*, and *Arabic for Living*, two primarily reading textbooks without listening material, were introduced for a short period for either validation or

supplementation until leadership officials decided to buy the global proficiency video-interactive *Gulf to the Ocean* textbook. Although this textbook was interactive and used the global method, it was incomplete and required an extensive supplementation. It was adapted and eventually, used by all three Middle East schools for about 21 years.

In early 2007 these traditional, teacher-centered incomplete textbooks were replaced by this new innovative task/content-based, student-centered, *ABC*. The new course may have concluded the initiatives of curriculum change and textbook adaptation and supplementation, yet it provided a comprehensive opportunity to embrace the theoretical principles of CLT implemented at DLIFLC.

As in every new product, a validation edition may require some revision; the new *ABC* was introduced to Arabic Schools in early February 2007 for preliminary feedback comments and maintenance. While overall feedback concerning *ABC* has been positive, the pros and cons of *ABC* will be analyzed further after the students, who are using it, graduate. In the meantime, corrections to editing and other errors within the textbooks continue.

The first class to graduate using the new *ABC* however, showed highly impressive results. May 2008, graduating class *AD00607* of the Middle East School One, Department C, 94% received 2 or higher in listening, 100% received 2 or higher in reading, 67% received 2 or higher in speaking, and 100% received 1+ or higher in speaking.

### **Brief Literature Review**

The Communicative Language Teaching which is, the teaching methodology approach that has been in use since the late 1970's, was the center of criticism since it was introduced. Campbell and Tovar (2007) summarize the argument of scholars in the field of language acquisition into three main groups: Group 1 is focused on the scholars who point out to the absence of "an in-depth description" of the content base of CLT. A content that can be used beyond the language functions of a syllabus design. Group 2 observers indicate that CLT proponents were neglecting the development of linguistic competence, and were not paying attention to grammar instruction. In other words, teachers were avoiding explicit instruction. However, group 3 scholars propose combining pedagogical tasks with a systematic focus on form, as the fundamental organizational units to communicative syllabus. The argument of the latter group led to a paradigm shift towards a "principled communicative approach" incorporating both direct, explicit grammar instruction and task-based instruction into CLT.

The top proponents of CLT discussed this grammar integrative approach. Davidheiser (1996) believes that focus of grammar "was shifted and the learner began to direct the curriculum through the interaction of learning tasks." Likewise, Long (1998) explains that "grammar instruction can be conducted with paraphrasing activities and clarification of personalized and real-life text content." According to Ellis (1998), the focus on form (fof) concept (in grammar), which is part of a framework for grammar, "may determine proficiency". In addition, error correction is seen by Long (2001), "as a part of a framework for grammar" which also can determine proficiency. Larsen-Freeman (2002) suggests that "proficiency factors are determined by three dimensions: accuracy, function, and context". Those three tightly connected dimensions are translated into: forms, meaning and use, or pragmatics.



## **Principles Underlying the Arabic Basic Course**

A learner-centered curriculum, like the *ABC*, is the heart of the theoretical framework for communicating language learning. It employs authentic materials, skill integration in a real-life context. It promotes interaction and encourages pair and group work activities and personalization. The *ABC* principles support teacher/student negotiation about curriculum, and maximize student-student interaction and student participation in a variety of communication activities. Finally, it uses task-based instruction, tailoring to learner styles or preferences, and information gap. It also maximizes the use of the target language, the use of appropriate forms of feedback, and teacher acting as a facilitator.

Nunan (2006) categorizes the concept of learner-centered curriculum with two main dimensions: involvement of learners in making choices about what to learn, how to learn, and how to be assessed, and the active involvement of learners in learning through doing. This notion of communicative principles is integrated in the *ABC* in almost all of the 61 developed chapters. Content-based instruction (CBI) is the focal point of chapter development. Each chapter is categorized by one content, and all chapter elements and material prepared are characteristics of task-based instruction (TBI) varieties of communicative activities. These elements are focused on the following concepts:

### *Communication through Interaction*

The impact of the above concept on the scope and sequence and other aspects of the *ABC*, suggest that tasks developed should reflect the real world. Students are given scenarios which place them in a plausible real world context that must interact with teachers and with each other to solve a problem. In order to accomplish tasks, and report their findings students must engage in different tasks involving listening, reading, speaking, writing, and transcription & translation. To illustrate this concept, students will read and listen to authentic audio broadcasts on topics related to Arabic content areas relevant to their needs, and they will engage in various tasks and problem-solving activities. (*Appendix B, Presentation A*).

### *Use of Authentic Materials*

Right from the beginning, the chapters are organized to reflect communication factors. Authentic materials cover all activities involved in chapter development of reading, listening, speaking, writing, grammar, dialect and culture. (*Appendix A*). For the purpose of this article, a sample authentic materials (Chapter 37, listening, reading speaking and writing activities are included in (*Appendix B-Lesson activity*)). Authentic activities in this sample as well as in other chapters are adapted from two major copyrighted websites: <http://asharqalawsat.and wikipedia.com>.

The determining factors for copyright issues is based on an authorized permission from the source of publication. In order to obtain such an authorized DLIFLC curriculum developers need to specifically write a letter asking for permission to use texts, articles, images, photos, audio and video clips, as language teaching materials, and certify that it will be strictly used for non-profit, educational purpose only and they will not be made available to any commercial parties for commercial use. Once this authorization is attained, developers may use the materials.

Authorized copyright permissions obtained for the *ABC* curriculum development and used as controlling factors include <http://asharqalawsat.and wikipedia.com>, alhayat, aldustourr, annahar, alarab and alyawm newspapers, alarabi and sayidati, and almajalla magazines, iraqhurr.org, un.org-arabic-radio, radio sawa.url, gloss.url and SCOLA .org.url. To illustrate this concept, each chapter of the *ABC* program is provided by reading and listening copyrighted material taken from these sources.

### *Learner Focuses on Language and Learning Process*

Activities of the *ABC* are organized on what the learner needs to do with the language in terms of target tasks and language learning process. A brainstorm activity with illustrations precedes the presentation of vocabulary in every chapter. Chapter setting and objectives are heading each of the chapters' reading, listening, and grammar activities. Tasks are emphasized to reflect information gap with pair and group activities. To illustrate this concept, chapters are provided with reading and listening dialogues or monologues. Students will be asked to do matching activities, writing the correct response, practicing with a partner, forming new sentences, circling the appropriate exchange, exchanging the information, extracting EEI's, and discussing information (*Appendix B*).

### *Personalization: The Learner's Own Experiences as Critical to the Learning Process*

The learning process is often supported with a personalization activity relevant to the learner's interest and experience. Each chapter is provided with real-life scenarios that lead to interaction in pair and group activities. Learners own experiences become critical to realization of the learning process and task/content-based activities. Some related tasks to this concept include talking, or writing personal information, making a list of this information, and sharing it with class individually or in groups. (*Appendix B, Presentation A, Activity 1*).

### *Links between Classroom Language Learning and Language Use Outside of the Classroom*

One of the advantages of the *ABC* curriculum is that it is organized in a way that each unit has its own textbook and homework book. Textbooks and homework books share the table of contents formats with one systematic style of format in the table of contents with vocabulary, and grammar in context presentations. They also share digital formats, the audio glossary, linking the audio files to Smart Board, and the integration of culture. Another advantage is that each chapter is addressed by a self-evaluation sheet and teacher notes that are associated with the same page numbers across chapters. Learning strategy boxes for personalization and other aspects of the learning process are also associated with pagination and organization. With the use of authentic materials, these tools assist learners and teachers to link activities upon discussion.

Such an organization of the curriculum's learning strategy boxes and guided tasks is in particularly reflected in upper semester 2 chapters. Recall or Protocol technique is implemented to discuss activities and analyze those tasks. (*Appendix B, presentations A, B, C, Let's Talk, Glossary, Scripts, and Teaching Speaking*).

### **Design of the New *ABC***

Both the outline headline and the student guide activity to all units of the *ABC* are organized by an on-line master schedule. A road map for a listening book, homework book, thematic glossary, supplementary materials, and a guide to file headlines are outlined in this master schedule.

Grammar in context is outlined similarly with presentations, comprehension checks, and activities that are carefully contextualized and taught inductively then followed by explicit rules. Grammar instruction is a process conducted through meaning-focused activities with practices based on topics. In semester one the curriculum introduces the concepts, and in semester two grammar issues are revisited. Concepts are expanded with reviews, additional exercises, and grammar notes. For example, in order to reemphasize the noun in construct (Idaffa concept), which was examined in an earlier chapter, students are directed to go to the reading passages introduced in **Presentation A** of advanced chapter and put *one* line under every first term of this concept, and *two* lines under every second term. Then students are requested to check their answers with those of a partner and write their findings about the changes that happen to dual and plural forms when formulating a new Idaffa structure.

### *Organizational Structure*

The *ABC* is organized to cover two semesters. Semester one (S1) includes 11 lessons in the Sound & Script (S&S) and 20 chapters afterwards. Five chapters compose one unit, and therefore there are four units in semester 1 in addition to the S&S lessons. Semester two (S2) reflects 6 units. Each unit includes 5 chapters. The whole curriculum of 1 and 2 consist of eleven lessons for the S&S and 50 chapters for S1 and S2. Each semester covers about 22 weeks of instruction. There are 8 unit tests for 1 and 2 with four End of Course tests: (101, 102, 201 & 202). Semester three is in process of being developed, notably, the two existing End of Course tests (301 & 302) developed earlier will continue to be used. Final Learning Objectives (FLO) topical areas for S3 development would outline theme-based lessons relevant to students' needs with a proficiency level targeted of 2/2+. Below is a structure outline to the *ABC* curriculum.

Semester One (S1)		Semester Two (S2)	Semester Three (S3)
Proficiency Level targeted: 1/1+		Proficiency Level targeted:1+/2	Proficiency Level targeted:2+/2
S&S Lessons: 1-11	Units: 1-4 Chapters: 1-20	Units: 5-10 Chapters 21-50	In Process
S&S test	Unit tests	Unit tests	In Process
	Unit 1 Unit 2 Unit 3 Unit 4	Unit 5 Unit 6 Unit 8 Unit 9 Units 7 & 10 (No Unit tests)	Not Determined
	End of Course tests	End of Course tests	End of Course tests
	101 (Units 1 & 2) 102 (Units 3 & 4)	201(Units 5 & 6) 202 (Units 8 & 9)	301 & 302

### *Chapter Design and Organization*

The syllabus design and the primary chapter components of curriculum activities are summarized into three main headlines: vocabulary in context, grammar in context, and language in use. Other chapter components include cultural notes, dialect, functioning in the real world, expand your vocabulary, let's talk, hone your listening skills, and a separate file of listening bank activities supplementing each chapter. Each vocabulary in context heading is outlined with presentations, comprehension check and activities. All in context presentations include a real-life context using images and contextual clues. (*Appendix B for Chapter Design and Organization*)

### *Content*

Each chapter is headed by a theme content area. All listening, reading, speaking, writing, grammar, culture, dialect, and homework activities are built around this content area. Each topic is derived from the Final Learning Objectives (FLO), sub-topical areas and treated separately. All tasks were designed on the basis of text typology and the ILR, skill level description.

Unlike other Arabic textbooks used at the Institute, the selection and sequencing of the *ABC* topics was based on real-life scenarios relevant to students' needs and compatible to the ILR proficiency levels. With the use of authentic materials, chapter topics are gradually progressing from everyday survival to biographical information and courtesy requirement to concrete and abstract topics. The basis of grammar-point selections are not driven by pattern drills or the grammar translation method rather they reflect the content of reading passages and listening dialogues used for every chapter. Presentation of grammar is controlled by meaning-focused, pair and group work comprehension check activities to explain lexical properties and structural forms used in passages or dialogues.

Contents of semester one include: Greetings, Location, Terrain and Weather, Immediate Environment, Family Home, Military life, Education and Jobs, Life at DLIFLC, Leisure time and Weekend Activities, Arab Americans, Arab World, Arab Cities, and Shopping in a Department Store. Semester two with levels *1+ /2* major topic involvement include: Tourism in the Arab World, Hobbies and Entertainment, Sports, Physical Fitness, and Health Nutrition. Other chapters include: Olympic Games, Education and School Issues, Employment and Military Service, Common Ailments and Accidental Injuries, as well as Medical Emergences, Consultations, Advances and War Injuries, Middle East Geography, Civilization, Natural Resources, Border Disputes, Global Warming, and Demographic Issues. Finally, higher level topics include: Economy and Political Conflict issues, and International Trade, and The March of Democracy in the Middle East.

### **Team**

The development of the chapters, writing the materials, and designing the whole course are accomplished by a team of DLIFLC professionals of subject matter experts, course managers, editors and reviewers, coordinators of production control, computer programmers, technical support, and proof readers. I joined the team about half way through the production, and I do not think that I am qualified to speak about the details of work distribution and experiences of team harmony and stability, which occurred before I joined. I can say however, that the basic trends of CLT foreign language methodology are reflected in the design of the course from the early chapters. Several highly skillful individuals, who left the team for one reason or another, have contributed to this project despite reflecting some shortages or a slow down to the process of production.

Around the time I joined the team of subject matter experts have been already condensed to a small number and focused on continuity, stability, and production of set curriculum activities. Each member is responsible for multiple tasks of collecting materials for listening and reading, designing tasks, writing scenarios, creating speaking activities, developing lesson presentations, creating and reviewing grammar exercises, designing thematic glossaries, producing homework activities, designing listening supplementary materials, recording, or editing. The review process, which is based on six-phase review is the responsibility of specialized members of the subject matter experts, and the supporting team such as the "English editor", the "Arabic editor", the "grammar master", the "production control reviewer" the "outside reviewer", or the "pre-print copy reviewer". All development, technical design, recording and review phases are coordinated, organized, and monitored by the course manager and the director of this project.

## Challenges

Deadlines, time factors, copyright issues, finding authentic listening materials and coordination of activities during all production phases of this curriculum design are highly challenging tasks to all team members. Towards the end of chapter development phase however, the production team faced a real challenge. The team is tasked to establish evaluation procedures for the entire curriculum. This task has not been in the planning procedures, nor is it a determined responsibility for the developers. However, with efforts of collaboration and cooperation, the team becomes in a position to accomplish eight unit tests, one test for each unit (except U7 and U10) covering listening, reading, speaking, writing, transcription and translation skills. Further challenging tasks are initiated by Evaluation Standards Division to establish the End of Course Test (EoCT) reflecting the: 101,102, 201 and 202 *ABC* tests as shown by the diagram above. (*Appendix A*) This initiative is now in process, and it is the responsibility of another team of production.

## Conclusion

Curricular change at DLIFLC informed by the latest trends in language theory is acquired on a daily basis as professional curriculum developers craft curricula. Communicative Language teaching which is considered the principle methodology approach at the Institute is reflected in the *ABC*. This article provided a brief background history on traditional teacher-centered Arabic textbooks used at DLIFLC, and published over the past years. Then, the article provided a short literature review. Next, it examined the principles underlying the new *ABC*. Finally, this article explored the design of the new *ABC* and reviewed examples from the *ABC* that incorporate the latest developments in the field.

I think that this new integrative, communicative, task and content based *ABC* will meet the challenge of the PEP requirements of 2+, 2+, 2 once semester 3 is developed. Reducing the class size from 10 students to six, allowing maximum interaction between students, better teaching and better curriculum, are only some elements of this requirement. The linguistic tools of this new project are focused on communicative approach to teaching and learning a foreign language, integration of skills, pair and group work, interactive grammar, with the goal being proficiency in speaking, listening, reading and writing. Foreign language professionals at DLIFLC will be in a position to integrate those language tools and adapt to change.

**Appendix A**  
*Chapter Design and Organization*

Chapter Setting	<i>In this chapter “of topic assigned” you will read articles and listen to audio broadcasts from the Arab world about the topic. You will increase your speaking proficiency in these subject areas by using the language you learn in a number of real-world scenarios.</i>
Objectives	<i>By the end of the “assigned” chapter, you will be able to understand, discuss, compare, use vocabulary, and answer variety of questions.</i>
Getting Started	<i>Talk with a colleague about the “topic”. In small groups, brainstorm words and examine pictures.</i>
Presentation A	<p style="margin-left: 40px;">a. <i>Read the text and with the help of the context clues, guess the meanings of the underlined words.</i></p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">b. <i>Listen to the text and pay special attention to the new words and how they are pronounced.</i></p> <p><b>Comprehension Check</b></p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">a. <i>Underline ALL the words or phrases that correctly complete each sentence.</i></p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">b. <i>Form complete sentences by matching a phrase from <b>column A</b> with a suitable phrase from <b>Column B</b>.</i></p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">c. <i>Answer the following questions (2 content questions).</i></p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">d. <i>Select a word or phrase from <b>Column A</b> and write it next to the most topically related term in <b>Column B</b> followed by a grammar note.</i></p> <p><i>Activity 1</i></p> <p><b>Scenario:</b> <i>You are a student of Arabic, and you want to continue your Arabic studies. The following activity “about the topic” explores the possibilities of “your interest”.</i></p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">a. <i>Divide the class into <b>Group A</b> and <b>Group B</b>. Each group reads the text assigned and writes the main idea.</i></p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">b. <i>Exchange the information you gathered with a colleague from the other group and summarize the main points as to: (3 main points from the reading text).</i></p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">c. <i>Form two groups. Group A listens to one news clip and Group B listens to a different clip. Write down the main idea in Arabic or English.</i></p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">d. <i>Listen once more and write down some supporting details.</i></p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">e. <i>With a partner, discuss and compare the information you wrote down.</i></p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">f. <i>With your partner, talk about a personal experience dealing with current topic.</i></p>

Let's Talk	<i>Scenarios and role plays for Day One.</i>
Presentation B	<i>Involves all the components of Presentation A (Activity 2).</i>
Let's Talk	<i>Scenarios and role plays for Day Two.</i>
Presentation C	<i>Involves all the components of Presentations A &amp; B (Activity 3).</i>
Let's Talk	<i>Scenarios and role plays for Day Three.</i>
Culture	<i>Go on line and do research on the topic.</i>
How Do Arabs Say It?	<i>You will listen to dialogues in Egyptian, Iraqi and Levantine dialects and answer the questions below: (recognition questions and gathering information).</i>
Language in Use	<i>Scenarios, reading and listening texts with multiple tasks, and activities on each text.</i>
Hone your Listening Skills and supplementary listening bank	<i>For additional listening material on the topic.</i>
Expand Your Vocabulary	<i>Based on what you read or listened in grammar activities, presentations or language in use, copy the underlined words, and write their English equivalents in the table below. (5 Arabic sentences with underlined words and a table).</i>
Self Evaluation	<i>Students will look over the objectives of the chapter, and see if they achieved language goals by checking yes or no. (A list of goals and boxes for checking).</i>
Glossary	<i>40 to 60 new vocabularies with their derivational measures, and singular/plural translated into English.</i>
Scripts	<i>For all audio texts identified by page numbers, presentations, and steps.</i>
Teaching Speaking	<i>Speaking at Level 1+ to 2, and 2 to 2+. Boxes of speaking tasks and questions suggested to teachers to use in any way they feel appropriate for topics and students' levels.</i>



**Appendix B**  
*Sample Chapter and Activities*

*Chapter 37*

Dentistry and Health Consultation

Chapter Setting

In this chapter, you will read articles and listen to audio broadcasts from the Arab world on the topics of medical, dental and pharmaceutical concerns. You will increase your speaking proficiency in these subject areas by using the language you learn in a number of real-world scenarios and by creating a presentation for the class.

Objectives

*By the end of this chapter, you will be able to:*

- Understand articles and broadcasts on medical and dental topics
- Discuss medical issues in Middle Eastern countries
- Compare and contrast visits to the doctor and dentist in the U.S. and Arab countries
- Use vocabulary about medical concerns in every language tasks
- Answer a variety of questions on the topic of doctor and dental visits.

Let's Talk

*Students-ideas for working with the "Let's Talk" scenarios and gaining the most benefit from them:*

- Divide these speaking tasks among the days that you study the chapter:
- After doing the role-plays once, exchange roles and repeat them.
- Plan some preparation time to look up words or expressions you need and add them to your "Personal Vocabulary" page in the Glossary.
- Take brief notes but do not write out your responses word-for-word. Give spontaneous replies, even if they are not full sentences or grammatically correct.
- For homework, record and listen to your responses. Give a recording you like to your teacher:
- Be aware of basic grammatical structures such as past, present and future tense: and gender, number and definiteness agreements.
- After practicing the role-plays with your partner or group, perform one in class.

Speaking Activities for DAY ONE

1. What procedures do the nurse and the doctor perform when you go in for a physical checkup? (*Hint: Use present-tense verbs.*)
2. Have you ever broken a bone, had stitches, or gotten a scar? Tell your partner the story of what happened. (*Hint: Use past-tense verbs.*)
3. You are among a dozen individuals who are going on a week-long hike and camp-out. What things will your group carry for administering first aid? (*Hint: Use future-tense verbs.*)

4. Role-play (1): You have just given directions to someone on how to get to the hospital. Using the first photo, describe the building and area outside so that the person will know what it looks like. Your partner repeats the role-play using the second photo.  
Role-play (2): You've gotten to know an Iraqi family who arrived recently in the U.S. Give detailed advice to the man or the woman (role-played by a partner) on how to look for and decide on a good family doctor or dentist.

### Sample Activity

Divide the class into two groups. Listen to excerpts from an interview between a doctor and his patient. Write down the main idea in Arabic or English.

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## **Learner: Perceptions of an Arabic Student at DLIFLC**

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Due to unique medical circumstances and a subsequent rollback in October 2007, I have had the opportunity to learn the Arabic Basic Course (ABC) first semester curriculum at the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center (DLIFLC) in Monterey, California, as taught by two different teaching teams.

The Institute is universally heralded as one of the best language learning institutions in the world and is striving to improve the methods used for language acquisition. Language learning is a science, and the learning of second language (L2) Arabic by English-speakers especially, is a relatively new field. Foazi Y El Barouki offers a brief history of the DLIFLC Arabic program from its inception in 1947 to the present in his article "Developing a Learner-Centered Curriculum: The New ABC." He points out that in its 61 years of existence, the program has undergone eight major changes, evolving from a children's book published in 1920 to the current ABC curriculum developed in 2007.

Like any system demanding constant evolution to retain effectiveness in an ever-changing world, the Arabic program at the Institute is no exception in its need for incremental tweaks and refinements. Believing that those in the classroom would have insight into what was and what was not working in the curriculum, I conducted a survey of 50 Arabic students, ranging from first semester students of the 64-week course, to recent graduates and students in post-Defense-Language-Proficiency-Test (DLPT) studies at DLIFLC, i.e., the typically 12-week follow-on course to the ABC. (See attached survey in the Appendix). The first half of the survey reproduced a poll conducted by Beatrice C. Dupuy in a 1997 issue of *Applied Language Learning* to satisfy curiosity as to what today's Arabic students find enjoyable and beneficial in language learning. The other half of the survey was modeled similarly, and written to gauge students' opinions on technology in the classroom.

The article highlights positive and negative aspects of the curriculum which were commented on by my survey-takers. Many of their concerns mirrored those that soldier-student colleagues and I have expressed during our dining-hall discussions and breaks between classes. This article points out areas in which resources and time could be used more efficiently and could provide an impetus for positive change.

### **The Observer's Perspective**

Before I begin, please allow me a concise personal introduction and an attempt to defend my fitness to write this article. I was raised in a bilingual household, learning English and Polish concurrently. The myriad advantages of learning a secondary language early on became evident as I trail blazed through the undergrowth of my undergraduate education; in fact, the advantages were to set the stage for what was to become a fascination

with Linguistics and the nature of learning/intelligence in general. I studied French in high school and gained moderate proficiency in Spanish during three years of college as an English/Linguistics double-major. I dabbled in computer programming and became an accomplished musician as well, gravitating towards fields which I consider to be congruent (or at least parallel) to language learning in that they require: tenacious practice and some blunt-force repetition of syntactical “scales” and morphological “riffs” (a repeated tune or theme). I came to espouse a world view and value system inspired by Terence McKenna’s quote: “I don’t believe that the world is made of quarks or electromagnetic waves, or stars, or planets, or any of these things. I believe the world is made of language.” With such a background, ASVAB, DLAB, and IQ scores of 99, 136, and 165, respectively, but no diploma, money, or hopes for a career beyond the blue-collar until I finished my degree, enlisting in the Army as a linguist seemed my logical option for professional advancement and personal gain.

My recruiter had praised the level of excellence DLIFLC demanded from both its students and teachers, and I was excited to meet the challenge of absorbing another language as if through “a fire-hose to the brain.” In what seemed to me the blink of an eye, I found myself 40,000 feet over California making a descent to the Institute and a town I knew only through Steinbeck novels.

After my first few months came to a close, as the honeymoon phase was ending, I found myself becoming increasingly jaded and disappointed by what I will view as is a less-than-perfect system. Although I maintained a 3.7 GPA throughout my enrollment in Arabic and was lauded by my teachers as perhaps the most naturally-gifted and promising student they had ever seen in their years at DLIFLC, after a year spent learning Arabic, due to an indiscretion on my part, I was sent to wrench on tanks and other tracked-vehicles. I am struck by the irony of a quote that echoes to me from across two decades, printed in a 1987 issue of *Dialog on Language Instruction*, “*It does not make sense to train an individual for a year then send him off to wash tanks. That is a waste of resources*” (4/2, p.66).

Before shipping out to wash tanks, however, I received the serendipitous assignment of assisting Dr. Lidia Woytak at the Office of Academic Journals, and had the opportunity to conduct a survey on a topic that personally interested me. Publishing this article will hopefully prove informative to the higher echelons of technology-integration, planning, and curriculum development.

### **Efficiency of Time Versus Counterproductivity**

First and foremost of the comments I received is that in practice the current curriculum could offer more flexibility. Added flexibility could offer more precious hours and resources that could be applied to accomplishing more productive and necessary goals. Most days, I felt that one or two classroom hours could be used productively on creative and challenging assignments rather than on redundant tasks that enforced material obviously already understood by the students, but which the teachers insisted, often bemoaned, was mandatory, according to the printed schedule.

Most frequently, this issue arose during speaking practice sessions where one or two concepts or phrases became the entire focus, such as exploring the usage of كم (pronounced: “kem”) by asking “how many ... do you have? Good. How many ... do you have? Now, how many ... do you have? And how many ...?” for 50 minutes at a stretch.

We were redirected by our teachers if we diverted from the narrow vocabulary set or chose to explore conversational topics of greater complexity.

In all fairness, there *were* class hours in which we found ourselves to have completed required lessons ahead of schedule and the opportunity presented itself for several novel classroom activities. I found the teachers of both teams I studied under to be extremely helpful during these unscripted class periods, willing to teach on current events, discuss culture and traditions in Arabic, and basically spare no effort in facilitating the process of language learning. Such proactive activities included:

1. “Question and answer” classroom time used to explain tough grammatical concepts, to augment vocabulary retention by having three-letter roots or word etymologies explained and interrelated in depth, and to otherwise smooth over any potholes in any student’s road to language learning.

2. Team-Based games or contests employing mnemonics and friendly competition to strengthen vocabulary memorization.

3. Authentic listening and reading materials, i.e., “audio-visual materials” selected by the teachers themselves which directly relates to the current vocabulary and grammar being learned, yet which, to our thirsty minds, were a welcome oasis in the vast Sahara of a textbook-based curriculum. Examples of such material include, but are not limited to, BBC Arabic articles, current events excised from Al-Jazeera broadcasts, Arabic sports highlights focusing on number usage, and my personal favorite - excerpts from militant Islamist propaganda or children’s cartoons dubbed in MSA.

These video clips would have transcriptions made out which were revealed and explained only after students spent considerable time reviewing the clip, answering questions about the clip, etc. as a class. As can be seen in the tabulated survey results, an overwhelming 70% of the students (35 of 50) surveyed found audio-visual source materials to be the most pleasurable way they learn Arabic.

Table 1. *What Students Think is More Pleasurable for Language Acquisition*

In-Class Listening Passages	Self-Paced Listening Study	Combination of In-Class Listening Passages and Self-Paced Listening Study	Audio-Visual Source Materials
0 (0%)	11 (22%)	4 (8%)	35 (70%)

The entertainment value of such audio-visual materials cannot be denied - I remember in particular a clip from a Little Red Riding Hood cartoon in which a wolf hungrily eyes a plump duck garbed in red and declares... mmmm ladhith.... bata meshuia... Ta3m m’fudl... I will never again forget how to say “Delicious grilled duck is my favorite food...,” a phrase of dubious strategic application, but one which locked the definitions and pronunciations of several vocabulary words forever in my mind.

These activities were an invaluable respite from the daily grind, but were sometimes treated with an awkward hush-hush vibe because they went “outside the box” of the structured curricular schedule. Teachers should be encouraged to teach to students’ individual intelligences and be lauded for taking such initiative.

### **An Apple (or PC) a Day...**

My suggestion for optimizing time is not a new one -- to institute a computerized method of ascertaining students’ progress on a more daily basis than unit tests permit and allow teachers the freedom to steer their classes in the directions their students need to achieve optimal language proficiency. I quote Col. Daniel D. Devlin, former commandant of DLIFLC:

*Imagine students doing their homework each night and a language teacher asking the computer each morning, “How did my students do?” The computer would identify a certain concept a few students didn’t grasp or the segment of instruction no one in the classroom understood. The teacher then would identify the portion that must be readdressed and solidified in students’ minds before they can move on. We currently don’t have a method of tracking homework of each student individually and as a group. (“Linguist in Action,” *Applied Language Learning*, Vol.... 8, Num. 2, p. 305, [1997])*

With a daily understanding of where students are at academically, teaching teams would feel more comfortable making day-by-day judgement calls differentiating between which activities are truly necessary and which are redundant. The teachers at the Institute are capable and professional enough to dictate the pace and direction of their classes without such a tool. However, perhaps a computerized system would make those in charge more comfortable allowing teachers more freedom to do their jobs, with the students ultimately benefitting in the end.

### **Class Struggle**

Other issues mentioned by many students I surveyed is that not all students operate with the same degree of efficiency in all learning environments and that not everyone’s learning pace or learning style is the same. My experience was that the slow students held back the pace of my Arabic classes, leading to disillusion and frustration among us quicker learners. Another problem is that teaching styles geared towards a visual learner, for example, might not reach another equally intelligent student who is an auditory learner. Slowing down to the pace of the “lowest-common-denominator” prevents naturally gifted, “high-speed” students from reaching their language learning goals. Conversely, slower students are not afforded a chance to learn if they are rushed or their learning style is not accommodated in some way.

I put forth the idea that classes based on a modified “ability group” theory may alleviate this problem. Applied by the Army in basic combat training, ability group methodology suggests that separating soldiers into workout groups based on individual 2-mile run times will increase overall PT pass rates because it caters to the different

paces of training required by soldiers of different fitness levels, maximizing the greatest number of soldiers' physical potentials. My first Arabic teaching team divided the class of 24 students into three 8-person classes based on our first three units' test scores, and although I cannot offer personal experience from the lower two ability groups, I found my class time far more enjoyable, engaging, and productive when surrounded by students with a similar knack and motivation for language learning.

To extend my theory's application and address varied learning styles, I suggest that one or two weeks be added after the Smart-Start workshop preceding a student's start in Arabic class in order to "diagnose" each student's learning style through a battery of tests and questionnaires. Then, the student can be more efficiently sorted into a class by learning style. If one teaching team were in charge of 50 students all who were visual learners or kinesthetic "hands-on" learners, they could tweak the curriculum to play up to their students' strengths, swapping some of the "auditory-learner-focused" activities for others. Students with similar learning styles could mesh together better in the classroom than those worlds apart learning-wise, and a room of seven or eight smart, like-minded individuals might have a tremendous synergy, creating a "1+1=3" effect. I believe that these changes, if instituted, could increase the DLPT passing rate by no narrow margin.

### **A Brief Comparison**

To achieve excellence in any field of teaching, it is important not only to address students' learning styles, but to keep the curriculum as pleasurable and engaging as possible while maintaining quality learning. As can be seen in the tabulated results, although none of the 50 students' surveyed found self-selected reading to be the most beneficial to language learning, 56% percent of them found it to be the most pleasurable of the options. Also, though only 8% and 28% of those surveyed preferred assigned reading and a combination of assigned reading with self-selected reading, respectively, 32% and 56% found them to be the most beneficial to learning a language. Although I do not have a suggestion for what to do with this information beyond making the pleasurable activities more beneficial and vice-versa, I hope that these results speak for themselves, and can help someone find a way to maximize benefit and pleasure in teaching languages.

Table 2. *What Students Think is More Pleasurable for Language Acquisition versus...*

Assigned Reading	Self-Selected Reading	Combination of Assigned and Self-Selected Readings	Grammar Instruction & Practice
4 (8%)	28 (56%)	14 (28%)	4 (8%)

*...What Students Think is More Beneficial for Language Acquisition*

Assigned Reading	Self-Selected Reading	Combination of Assigned and Self-Selected Readings	Grammar Instruction & Practice
16 (32%)	0 (0%)	28 (56%)	6 (12%)

**Significance of Audio-Visual Materials and a Modernized Curriculum**

Most beneficial to my language learning was the time I spent outside of class studying on my own, and in TABLE 3, it can be seen that a total of 76% of the students surveyed found that self-directed listening or some combination of self-directed and in-class listening was also the most beneficial.

Table 3. *What Students Think is More Beneficial for Language Acquisition...*

In-Class Listening Passages	Self-Paced Listening Study	Combination of In-Class Listening Passages and Self-Paced Listening Study	Audio-Visual Source Materials
2 (4%)	17 (34%)	21 (42%)	10 (20%)

However, as far as in-class activities go, 0% of the students surveyed found in-class listening (a common activity) most pleasurable, and only 4% found it most beneficial. Compare this to the 70% of students finding audio-visual materials most pleasurable, 20% finding them most beneficial, and the 80% of students who prefer a modernized curriculum (see TABLE 4). The results indicate that audio-visual materials should be a larger part of in-class learning than they are today.

Table 4. *What Students Prefer Overall*

*Results for Survey Question c.*

Reading	Grammar Instruction & Practice
31 (62%)	19 (38%)

*Results for Survey Question f.*

Textbook/Workbook-Based Curriculum	Modernized Curriculum (Multimedia)
10 (20%)	40 (80%)

NOTE: Out of the ten students who preferred an “old-school” textbook-based curriculum, seven explained that their reason for eschewing the modernized curriculum was only due to the high-occurrence of bugs, glitches, or human error that they had experienced in their classes. The following student response to survey question f. sums up this sentiment:



*[a modernized curriculum incorporating such technological advances as multi-media, the internet, and educational hardware/software (laptop computers/iPods/Rapid Rote)] ...would be more effective and in keeping with the learning style of the current generation, but only if the equipment is maintained in working] order. Textbooks never break down.*

### **More on Technology in the Classroom**

In his interview *Linguist in Action*, COL Daniel D. Delvin proposed a future in which DLIFLC students would use more technology in the classroom. Ten years later, COL Devlin's vision was still to be fully realized. The majority of the classwork I did could have been accomplished with no more sophistication than a quill and a papyrus scroll - my class often skipped smart board activities because they were glitchy, took too long to load, or the high technology proved to be more complicated than necessary for the tasks at hand. "Smart board" proved to be deceptive nomenclature.

The use of Smart-boards and iPods, when they work, is in my opinion the greatest recent development in the L2 classrooms. As a predominantly auditory learner, having audio language resources literally in my pocket, available for access, replay, and refinement, anytime, anywhere, at my own pace has been invaluable. I've listened to Arabic dialogues and run through thematic glossaries or vocabulary lists while waiting in the checkout line at Trader Joe's, walking across the post, or while running and weight-lifting. Having the availability of five minutes-here, ten-minutes-there "plug-and-play" L2 access is a technological breakthrough in language learning that should be exploited to its full potential. Although would-be linguists may never have the capability to connect their brains directly into some supercomputer and upload skills instantaneously like Keaunu Reeves learning Kung-Fu in the movie *The Matrix*, using technology to its full potential could speed up the process significantly.

Notebook computers were initially promised to my class as a teaching aid, though ultimately, we only received iPods. Stronger computer integration in the classroom was a common complaint mentioned by those surveyed, and if there were the resources available to issue students laptops during their studies at DLIFLC, I imagine that a daily diagnostic activity or quiz could be performed on the computers as a gauge of a class progress. Even if the institution lacks sufficient funding to finance such an endeavor, more use could be made of the Internet and the all-access computers available in the library and at other on-post computer labs to connect the teachers with their students with less paper and more convenience.

The notebook PCs which were initially advertised to my class had a stylus and the capability to "read handwriting." With the addition of top-of-the-line language learning software, computers could fill the role of a tutor, offering students a portable electronic study-buddy with a light-speed means of two-way communication with their teaching team.

When I attended Miami University of Ohio, the faculty of the English Department made use of a software program called "banner-web" to keep students and teachers in constant contact. Banner-web was basically an online discussion forum/e-mail network through which students could post homework and writing assignments for class credit and peer/teacher feedback. With daily input from teachers and peers through banner-web, my

writing skills increased at a much quicker pace than they would have otherwise. I believe that investigating the creation of an interactive online hub for linguists in-training would greatly improve both the speed and quality of language learning here at DLIFLC.

Eleven years after COL Devlin expressed his vision for the future, to my knowledge, there is still room to design a system for tracking students' homework individually or as a group. I believe a system could be designed and implemented at minimal cost since all the technology necessary is already available on post.

### **Technology Integration: Essential in the 21st Century**

Applying the most recent advances of technology to L2 learning is not only important in its potential to increase retention and speed in L2 learning, but is, in my opinion, essential to reach the minds of a new generation of linguists. I am a member of a new breed of linguist, a young adult born during the baby-boom of the Eighties, echoing the post-WWII generation of my parents. My generation follows a cold war rather than a hot one, and we enjoyed a childhood of economic national security until 9/11. Angry and indignant at the offense to our great nation, many like myself marched to the recruiter's office in answer to the call to protect the American freedoms we were raised to demand.

Mine is a computer-literate and tech-savvy generation, one raised increasingly on high technology, for whom video games and flatscreen monitors have replaced television as the "babysitter box," and for whom e-mail and text messaging have usurped written communication to the extent that many of my contemporaries lack enough practice to have decently legible hand-writing. The exponentially increasing impact that technology has on day-to-day affairs has made life easier for my "wired" and e-junkie cultural compatriots, but has had the unfortunate consequence of rendering many of us functionally illiterate and unresponsive to older, more labor-intensive forms of media.

The way I learned how to play the piano was referred to as the "Suzuki Method," and involves a student listening to a recording of a selected piece until the melody becomes ingrained in his/her mind, then employing a methodology of practice which requires starting over again from the beginning every time a mistake is made. I applied the same "suzuki" logic to my language learning, listening to my iPod constantly with hopes of picking up the language through aural osmosis, and by restarting the formulation of sentences and phrases I'd write if I made an error in the spelling, grammar, gender, etc. Listening and re-listening, writing and re-writing -- I attribute this 24-hour a day learning, my symbiotic relationship with my iPod, and the self-imposed demand of always staying "one chapter ahead," to the A's I constantly received in my studies. I envisioned however, that I could have been learning so much quicker and more efficiently had I been issued a laptop computer with language-specific software on it. Many students in my class used a flashcard program called Rapid-Rote with some frequency, praising how it aided their vocabulary-learning processes.

We are a plugged-in generation, spoiled by technology. Give us computerization and I wager we will give you more DLPT 3/3/2+'s...

### **The Homework Conundrum: What Type of Work is Too “Busy?”**

Referring to the problem of balancing homework load with usefulness and applicability, I received comments from about 70% of the students surveyed that their homework assignments fell short of preparing them adequately for the tests. There are two main reasons I see help justify their claim, both taken from my personal experiences:

First, the homework could relate closer to the content of the tests. Sometimes, however, it has little to do with the material being tested. An example of this could be the use of assignments from the previous curriculum being used to prepare students for a new-curriculum test. The vocabulary words being taught in this case are often not tested, and those being tested are occasionally left untaught.

Second, the homework could offer more opportunities for creative and challenging assignments in Arabic. In practice, however, it often follows a fixed formula, especially in the workbook, and fails to challenge a student creatively. For example, workbook homework usually begins with a reading passage, followed by an English-Arabic or an Arabic-to-English translation activity, next an Arabic-Listening passage, and finally, two sentences to transcribe. Often, the answers to these formulaic workbook assignments are available in the textbook verbatim if one merely takes a few minutes to look for them. Once this is discovered by students with a propensity to seek the easy way out of studying, they have the advantage of it. Overall, the homework is often just too much “busy work,” and can waste time that could be spent in individual study focusing on a student’s individualized needs.

### **Studying Smart**

Effective study habits are a learned skill. I believe more focus could be given to develop healthy study habits, focusing on quality versus quantity, at least in the first few months of class at the Institute. Most often the students I saw falling behind early in the course put in many hours of study a night and did not lack the mental capacity or will to succeed, but simply lacked studying skills. Falling behind for such reasons, without understanding why, can be a frustrating demotivator for otherwise talented students.

### **Conclusion**

I had watched GIJoe and other Saturday Morning Cartoons as a kid, and remember believing the Army “Be All That You Can Be” ads that aired during the commercials. The recruiting slogan has gone through several permutations since those days, but I was sold way back then on the idea that enlisting would afford me the opportunity to live up to my potential, and to give proper homage and service to a nation I am proud to call home. So far I have been both amazed and impressed by the quality of language teaching at DLIFLC, the effort put into curriculum development, and the dedication of the individual teachers themselves. However, there are areas that could be addressed by the faculty. Below these areas:

First, there could be more emphasis on flexibility in the daily application of the teaching schedule. Such flexibility would reduce the number of redundant assignments. Consequently, it would free precious time for creative assignments and for self-directed study time.

Second, I believe the curriculum might be streamlined and customized more if classrooms were organized into groups of students with similar motivation-levels, abilities, and learning-styles. Currently, the classes move too slow for some, too fast for others. Not all students are capable of “staying on the same page” or keeping pace. Academically inept or unmotivated students slow the language learning of others. In addition, individual students have different learning styles.

Third, there is a bridgeable gap between what students find beneficial and what students find enjoyable about language learning, and more effort could be made to find ways of amalgamating the two characteristics.

Finally, an increase in progress checks as well as attention to learning styles would be desirable in the instructional process on a daily basis. Such an approach would allow for individualized assignments that would fully maximize each student’s strengths or catch areas of difficulty before a student falls behind. The vast technologies available could be optimally used to maximize efficiency and language learning. If these areas were addressed, language learning would reach an even higher level at DLIFLC.

## Appendix

Name (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

Class Week # \_\_\_\_\_ or Current Unit of Study # \_\_\_\_\_

- a. Based upon your experience in this class and other foreign language classes you had before, which do you think is most beneficial for your becoming more competent in the foreign language you are studying? CHECK ONLY ONE and explain briefly your choice.**

- \_\_\_\_\_ assigned readings
- \_\_\_\_\_ self-selected readings
- \_\_\_\_\_ combination of assigned readings and self-selected readings
- \_\_\_\_\_ grammar instruction and practice

**Explain:**

- b. Based upon your experience in this class and other foreign language classes you had before, which do you think is most pleasurable? CHECK ONLY ONE and explain briefly your choice.**

- assigned readings  
 self-selected readings  
 combination of assigned readings and self-selected readings  
 grammar instruction and practice

**Explain:**

- c. Given a choice between reading easy literature and studying grammar, which would you prefer? CHECK ONLY ONE and explain briefly your choice.**

- reading  
 grammar instruction and practice

**Explain:**

- d. Based upon your experience in this class and other foreign language classes you had before, which do you think is most beneficial for your becoming more competent in the foreign language you are studying? CHECK ONLY ONE and explain briefly your choice.**

- in-class listening passages  
 self-paced listening study (i.e. iPod, MP3, audio-books)  
 combination of in-class listening passages and self-paced listening study  
 audio-visual source materials (Al Jazeera news clips, MSA sportscasts/cartoons)

**Explain:**

- e. **Based upon your experience in this class and other foreign language classes you had before, which do you think is most pleasurable? CHECK ONLY ONE and explain briefly your choice.**

- \_\_\_\_\_ in-class listening passages
- \_\_\_\_\_ self-paced listening study (i.e. iPod, MP3, audio-books)
- \_\_\_\_\_ combination of in-class listening passages and self-paced listening study
- \_\_\_\_\_ audio-visual source materials (Al Jazeera news clips, MSA sportscasts/cartoons)

**Explain:**

- f. **Given a choice between a traditional textbook/workbook-based curriculum, and a modernized curriculum incorporating such technological advances as multi-media, the internet, and educational hardware/software (laptop computers/iPods/RapidRote) which would you prefer? CHECK ONLY ONE and explain briefly your choice.**

- \_\_\_\_\_ textbook/workbook-based curriculum
- \_\_\_\_\_ modernized curriculum incorporating such technological advances as multi-media, the internet, and educational hardware/software (laptop computers/iPods/ RapidRote)

**Explain:**

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## NEWS AND VIEWS

### Syrian-Arabic Dialect Immersion

**Souhail Aridi**

*Continuing Education*

Two years ago, taking a tiny class of three to the Middle East for an immersion was unfeasible. Therefore, the immersion was attempted within the United States. With many Syrian-Arab immigrants and proximity to the students' school, Los Angeles was selected as the site. This paper discusses the morale of the students that came from this immersion and the nature of their interaction with Arab-native speakers in the Los Angeles area from a social and cultural perspective.

The language used by the students for their activities in Los Angeles was exclusively the Syrian dialect (known historically as *Levantine* or *Bilad Ash sham*).

The use of the dialect helped the students identify some idioms and learn about the language used in daily life in Syria. It is the language that a visitor to the Middle East is most likely to encounter, not only in Syria but also in the rest of the Levantine states, namely: Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine.

Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) *Level 3*, the Superior Level, is informally known as "professional-level proficiency." In order to surpass it, the students have to understand Arabic dialects, idioms, and proverbs. Familiarity with Arabic cultures is also required when dealing with people from a range of occupational fields in real-life social encounters of varying types. For example, it can often be difficult to understand a political, social, or sports news broadcast on a Lebanese TV channel without understanding the Lebanese or the Syrian dialect, culture, or background, especially in domestic settings.

Students in the Los Angeles immersion demonstrated enhanced motivation, i.e. a greater desire and effort to achieve the goal (Gardner, 1985) of increased oral proficiency as a result of social interaction with the Lebanese community in the large Californian city. The students were received with sweeping hospitality by the Lebanese community there. The pleasant atmosphere of the interaction and the motivation of the students to learn and meet with people was an important factor that broke the ice between the native and non-native speakers. The atmosphere encouraged the students to communicate effectively. It created a pleasant attitude of give-and-take and mutual respect and served as an excellent example of Accommodation Theory (Giles et al., 1978, 1991). According to the theory, attitude — or the overt manifestation of a person's values and beliefs — links the individual's rationale for any activity, such as learning, to motivation, or the range of behaviors and degree of effort employed in achieving goals. This linkage was especially evident in student behavior during social interactions.



## **The First Day of the Program**

The program began when we left town by car. Following one stop in Fresno we continued the drive southward to Los Angeles.

In Fresno, the students were greeted by native Arabic speakers with great hospitality, a hallmark of Arab cultural tradition. Students communicated with them in Arabic, albeit with a certain amount of timidity in the beginning. The students' "culture shock" was quite obvious when political issues regarding Iraq and U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East were brought up. Since they were communicating with native speakers whom they had never met before, the students were understandably hesitant to indulge in political discussions on issues about which they do not like to talk, or perhaps about which they know little. Arabs, in general, are much more interested in discussing politics than Americans, in my experience. Our students, at least, were a little shy, confused, and intimidated.

Moreover, the students could not hide their concern about the kind of judgment that might be made about them. Here they were in a Seven-Eleven Store in Fresno for the first time in their life, drinking sodas and eating donuts, and at the same time trying to communicate with two Lebanese gentlemen who love to discuss politics while eating or drinking. The students listened more than they spoke. Politics was the last thing that they were ready to discuss with two "political strangers."

We arrived in Los Angeles three hours later, and after checking in at our hotel in the Long Beach area, we all met to plan the second day of our itinerary.

## **The Second Day**

On the second day of our trip, students became worried about their speaking skills, exhibiting fear of error. This fear lowered their motivation to speak at worst and hampered their fluency at best. Yet, such anxiety in these unpredicted and unpredictable situations is normal, and the teachers dealt with each stage of reaction to the immersion experience on its own merits.

In keeping with the observation by Horowitz and Cope (1991) that "it is likely that incomplete control of the language would cause learners anxiety about others' opinions of them," our students were understandably nervous about how they sounded to and were perceived and understood (or not) by native speakers, especially at the beginning of the trip.

It is perhaps worth mentioning that one of the three students was an introvert. My colleague and I were concerned whether our students would be able to communicate with the members of the Arab community. The presence of an introvert complicated the matters even more. In essence, we wondered, would a small group of students, including two outspoken extroverts and one laconic introvert, function well in an immersion environment? Would our introvert student hinder our mission and delay the process of the immersion program?

There were other things we wondered about, too, on the second day of the immersion experiment. We wondered whether our students would get involved in discussing topics that might be of great concern to the Arab community in LA, but which might not be of interest to the students themselves. We also wondered whether the jokes

made by the Arabs, their sense of humor, and the hospitality they showered upon the students would motivate the students to interact, socialize, and speak with native speakers whom they had never met before.

The students wondered. They wondered what the members of the Arab-American community were like. They wondered about their religious beliefs, social life, interests, and customs.

The teachers and the students discussed all these issues and concerns openly, pinpointed the major obstacles, and suggested solutions to any problems that might impede communication. The teachers' attitude and motivation played an important role in calming students' worries, fears, and tensions. Furthermore, the Lebanese Arab-Americans were very familiar with American culture and showed considerable interest in speaking Arabic with the American students. With experience and exposure, the students' faces began to show that they were becoming comfortable interacting with native speakers and as a result were beginning to achieve a level of comfort in speaking Arabic. They appeared highly motivated and gained considerable confidence after only a few hours of interacting socially and culturally with native speakers toward the end of the day. The atmosphere was marked by a positive attitude on the part of all parties. Understanding the culture of a people helps tremendously in understanding the language.

### **The Issue of Culture**

Cultural competence, which includes the knowledge of the customs, beliefs and systems of meaning of another country as well as social structure, history, and religion, is indisputably an integral part of foreign language learning. The trip to Los Angeles made me realize the importance for dialects in teaching Arabic. Teachers of foreign languages typically incorporate culture studies and discussions into the curriculum and make the acquisition of cultural understanding a goal in reaching high-level proficiency. Teaching culture in the classroom is very important; however, direct instruction alone may not be enough. In our immersion trip, we planned to live the culture instead of just talking about it. "If we teach language without teaching at the same time the culture in which it operates, we are teaching meaningless symbols or symbols to which the student attaches the wrong meaning..." (Politzer, 1959) I believe that teaching about Arab culture and familiarizing students with it is a must in order to help them comprehend the Arabic language. Schemata: or the creation of background knowledge, as well as of Arab history, politics, geography, religions, literature, dialects, ethnic groups, and culture, is an indispensable tool for anyone who wants to understand the language and to master it.

Tomalin and Stempleski (1993, 7-8), modifying Seelye's (1988) goals of cultural instruction, have provided an answer pertinent to the question posed. According to them, the teachers of culture help students develop:

- an understanding of the fact that all people exhibit culturally-conditioned behaviors.
- an understanding that social variables such as age, sex, social class, and place of residence influence the ways in which people speak and behave.
- awareness of conventional behavior in common situations in the target culture.

- awareness of the cultural connotations of words and phrases in the target language.
- the ability to evaluate and refine generalizations about the target culture, in terms of supporting evidence.
- the necessary skills to locate and organize information about the target culture.

Interestingly, during our LA immersion, some of the parents we met in the Arab community were very taken with our students' interest in learning Arabic. They asked our students to speak to their children about the importance of learning Arabic and maintaining some fluency as heritage speakers of the language. They wanted our students to emphasize the benefits of bilingualism. Our students found themselves suddenly becoming role models, teachers and counselors. As a result, our students acquired a new, challenging mission that we had not planned for the trip. Both the parents and the students had established a mutual interest in learning from each other. The Lebanese parents were concerned that their children were shifting away from speaking Arabic, which is a very common experience among immigrant children. Shifting away from the language typically means shifting away from the culture and traditions, as well.

During our visit, we were invited to several Lebanese homes where we were greeted with great Arab hospitality. Amazingly, our students were really relaxed and highly motivated to speak and communicate with their hosts. They were witnessing the progress of learning a second language through live examples, and the process energized them, increasing their motivation to learn. For example, our students found it exceedingly interesting to discuss with their hosts the English words that originated from Arabic. The Lebanese-American kids, and some of their parents as well, were astonished to know that artichoke, sugar, coffee, spinach, and admiral are some of the hundreds of words that originally came from Arabic.

### **The Issue of Dialect in Arabic**

During our trip to the Lebanese community in Los Angeles, our students had the opportunity to use the dialect. This opportunity made us, student and teachers alike, aware of the need of an early instruction in Arabic dialects. Our trip has proven that learning dialects enables students of the Arabic language to excel and to advance in proficiency. We hope that teachers who tend to overlook the importance of dialect in their teaching, arguing that the issue should come at a later stage in the teaching of the Arabic language, would modify their position.

To show the importance of the dialects in the Arabic setting, I recorded from the Qatar-based Al-Jazeera TV channel a 30-minute political documentary titled "Political Crime." In the first part of the documentary, the introduction was 100% in MSA. The introduction gave a synopsis of Lebanese history in 1943: Bishara Al-Khoury, a Maronite Christian was elected President and Riad Al-Souh, a Sunni Muslim was appointed by the President as prime minister. Dr. Helal Al-Souh, who is a well-known historian and a relative of the late prime minister, used the Lebanese dialect when he was interviewed by Al-Jazeera. In the documentary, the historian says, "*Kan fi waHid ismu Hillo kamash al Hekumeh.*" Transcribed in Arabic, what he said would look like: *اسمو ملو كمش الحكومة: اسمه ملو و هو الذي القبض على أعضاء الحكومة: كان في واحد*. In MSA, it would look like this:

كان هناك شخص or, “*Kana hunaaka shakhsun ismohu Hillo wahuwa-l-lathi alqa-l-qabdha 9la a9thaa-il-hekumah.*” In English, the statement means “There was a guy (person) by the name of Hillo and (it was) he (who) arrested the members of the government.”

There are several discrepancies between the dialect and the MSA version, most important in the case of the verbs for “arrest.” The MSA version of the verb القى القبض is very clear. Of course, context is important. From the context here, it is understood that what was meant was indeed “arrest of the government members.” Otherwise, the word in the dialect could also mean “took hold of, or controlled.”

Another historian, the well-known Kamal Salibi, appears in the same documentary. Speaking about the period discussed in the program, Dr. Salibi uses a lot of Lebanese dialect. In fact, most of his speech on the TV show is in the dialect. Speaking about the late prime minister, Salibi said, “*Howee elly dhominlu – yabdou lee- 19tiraf souriah b lubnan,*” or هوي اللي ضمنلو – يبدولي – اعتراف سوريا بلبنان, which in MSA would look like this: هو الذي ضمن له اعتراف سوريا بلبنان or “*Huwa-l-lathee dhamina lahou 19tirafa sourieh bilubnan,*” or “He was able to secure Syria’s recognition of Lebanon.”

When Ali Shu9ib, another Lebanese historian, spoke, he did not shy away from the dialect, either. Analyzing the political situation in the period mentioned earlier, Dr. Shu9ib said, “*Raiis al wizaraa makansh 9indoo khayar akhar... Lee muwajahat du9at al in9izalia al Lubnaniah.*” In Arabic transcription, this would look like الإنعزالية اللبنانية Raiis Al wozaraa lam yakun 9indahu khayarun akhar, limuwajahat du9at al in9izalia al Lubnaniah. خيار اخر لمواجهة دعاة الإنعزالية اللبنانية. رئيس الوزراء لم يكن عندو خيار اخر لمواجهة دعاة الإنعزالية اللبنانية.

It must be noted here that often the differences between dialect and MSA surface in the way the words are pronounced. This is especially true of higher language levels. When dealing with upper level topics of politics and economics, for example, the dialect lacks the terminology and a blend of MSA and dialect prevails.

Another example from the same TV program may be found in the following exchange between journalist Zuhair Usairan and prime minister Al-Souh. “*Leish 9milt hayk? ليش عملت هيك؟*” Usairan asks in the dialect, meaning “Why did you do that?” The prime minister answers in the dialect, “*laou intasaroo jamm9it Edih kano kharbatu al diny kulha*” or “لو انتصرو جماعة إده كانوا جربطو الدنيا كلها” or “If Eddih’s party had won, they would have turned everything into a mess.” We should also take in consideration the diversities of different meaning of some terms or some words.

The word أمة “*Ummah,*” which means nation has several connotations. To a supporter of the Phalange Party (a Lebanese-Christian political party), it could mean the “Lebanese nation” as opposed to the Arab Nation, according to pan-Arab nationalists, such as Baath party supporters who believe in the unity of the Arab homeland from the Arabian Gulf in the east to the Atlantic shores of Morocco in the west. It has the same pan-Arab nationalistic undertones to the Nasserites, or followers of former Egyptian president Gamal Abdul Nasser. Syrian Social-Nationalist Party founder Antoine Saadeh, however, used the term to mean “Greater Syria,” or *Bilad al-Sham*, which groups Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine into one entity. Some Muslims conjure a wider sense of the meaning to encompass the entire Muslim world into the أمة الإسلام (the Nation of Islam.) This Group does not take geography, national identity, or ethnicity into consideration as a factor in defining the Islamic “Nation.” For them all Muslims are members of one Islamic Nation. There are so many words that could have different connotations and may be considered controversial such as: Terrorism”الإرهاب”. In a nutshell, we can say

that learning about the culture, the history and the politics of the Arab world would help produce a better understanding of the Arabic Language.

It is also important to know that the dialect contains a vast number of idioms and proverbs, let alone that the overwhelming majority of Arabic songs in all Arab countries are not in MSA but rather in the dialect. The same applies to movies, stage plays, and TV soap operas.

According to Leaver (2003), in “interpretation of the ability to communicate,” it is important to “convey the meaning accurately and in culturally appropriate ways.” Leaver explains how to acquire advanced professional proficiency by being able to understand fully all speech with extensive and precise vocabulary in all standard dialects on any subject relevant to professional needs. Reaching a high level of proficiency in any language is to become a native-like speaker; however, this does not happen overnight. It is a very long process of learning about the culture, the dialects, and the grammar of the target language through a wide spectrum of media, including an expansive list of content areas: politics, economics, geography, social and cultural aspects of traditions, literature, art, religions, and so on. Yet, it does not matter how long the process might take, or what it takes to do it.

What is important is when do we start? No doubt some learners are faster than others and it might take them fewer years than others to learn a language; others might take much longer to learn the language. But, we need to start!

### **Acknowledgement**

I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Leaver for her help and encouragement in person and through her books.

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## **Eleventh International Congress of Mapryal**

A Great Event for the Teachers of Russian

**Elena Krasnyanskaya**

*Continuing Education*

This report presents information about the XI International Congress of MAPRYAL (International Association of Teachers of Russian Language and Literature) “The World of the Russian Word and the Russian Word in the World” that was held in Varna, Bulgaria, on September 17-21, 2007. The main issues and new trends in Russian linguistics and methodology of teaching Russian as a second language, including the author’s presentation, that were discussed at the Congress are briefly described.

On September 17-21, 2007, XI International Congress of the International Association of Teachers of Russian Language and Literature “The World of the Russian Word and the Russian Word in the World” was held in Varna, Bulgaria. I was sent to this Congress by the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center from the Directorate of Continuing Education and express my gratitude for such an opportunity.

The Congress was opened by the President of the International Association of Teachers of Russian Language and Literature, the President of Saint-Petersburg University Professor L. A. Verbitskaya, who was followed by the spouse of the Russian President L. A. Putina, the Prime-Minister of Bulgaria Mr. Stanishev, and representatives of the Foreign Ministries of Russia and Bulgaria. Fifteen hundred participants from all over the world, from all the continents took part in the work of this Congress in fifteen sections and roundtable discussions. The latest achievements in teaching Russian both as a native and as a second language, as well as in research of the language, literature, and methodology were vehemently discussed by the world-renowned scholars, university and school teachers, and researchers.

It was not easy to choose a section, because there were dozens and dozens of interesting and useful reports and presentations as well as important and passionate roundtable discussions that were an integral part of the Congress, dealt upon various issues, and were chaired by outstanding scholars from Russia, the Czech Republic, Great Britain, Germany, and Bulgaria as moderators.

The leading Russian Publishing Houses participated in the work of the Congress. They displayed many newly published books to present and to sell there; thus, there was a chance to buy the latest editions. The representatives of two journals “Russian Abroad” and “The World of the Russian Word”, published in Russia, made several presentations and held discussions with the participants welcoming their articles, from foreign countries in particular.

As far as the issues discussed at the Congress are concerned (Russian linguistics, lexicon, grammar, phraseology, text typology, lexicography, methodology of teaching, test development and testing, area studies, linguistic-cultural studies, socio-cultural studies, literature, etc.) they were diverse, detailed, and very useful.

In Russian linguistics, many new terms appeared denoting new linguistic or methodological phenomena due to new areas of research and the expansion of international cooperation in it. For example, there appeared “literature of dispersion” (литература рассеяния), i.e., the works of Russian writers who live and work outside Russia; “testology” (тестология), i.e., a science of designing and developing tests; “testologist” (тестолог), i.e., a person who designs and develops tests; “credit system of evaluation” (translation loan from English – кредитная система оценки); “imagiology” (имаджиология), i.e., development of language skills through the history and culture of the country of the target language; “linguocultureme” (лингвокультурема), i.e., a realium of the target language since it is a part of the culture; “frame structure” (фреймовая структура), i.e., topical approach to designing and developing textbooks, etc.

In addition, all participants marked that the language norm in Russian is unstable at present and the language suffers from obvious excessiveness, because of the wide use of many borrowings and loans alongside indigenously Russian words. They also criticized the uncontrolled use of informal (low register) words in mass media and by government officials, and violation of grammar standards (stress, case endings in nouns, verbal endings in conjugations, etc.) It is worth noting that a group of Russian words denoting Soviet realia is quickly disappearing from the language, but these words have immediately been replaced by new realia of the post-Soviet period.

Significant progress was marked in lexicography. New bilingual and explanatory dictionaries were developed and published in time to meet the requirements of the society.

New important and rapidly developing trends in the methodology of teaching Russian as a second language and testing all language modality skills were effectively discussed by a great number of participants from the world famous scholars to university, elementary, middle, and high school teachers from all countries.

These issues include various aspects of teaching, testing, and developing textbooks for those who teach and learn Russian as a second language. One of the key problems discussed at the Congress was teaching a foreign language, Russian in particular, through culture, area studies and regional studies. This approach ran through all the presentations and discussions. Thus, all the participants arrived to a conclusion that a textbook should be based on two cultures (target language and native cultures).

The development of methodology of teaching Russian as a second language used to be based mostly on psychology of teaching and learning. At present, the results of numerous research works and their practical implementations show that methodology becomes more effective and expedient when it is also based on the linguistic characteristics of Russian (or any other target language) and the native language of the students.

The motto of the textbook “Russian for Everybody” has gone for good. At present, Russian textbooks for English, or Chinese, or Arabic, or German, or French speaking students, etc. have already been designed, developed, and published and are being designed and developed either by bilingual authors or in close cooperation with native speakers. Cultural peculiarities of both cultures are also seriously taken into consideration. Emphasis was placed on the frame structure of a textbook that means a topical design with a frame vocabulary and texts for each topical section, while eclectic approaches are considered inappropriate. Before designing and developing a textbook, it is mandatory to define an exact goal of teaching, desirable or required results, and specifics of each language modality for a certain course.

Since Russian as a synthetic language (as Latin, Greek, German, etc.), it is to a great extent based on grammar, because structural relations are expressed within a word form and auxiliary words. In addition, it was recommended to make grammar a leading part of the textbook, especially for basic studies. It does not mean memorizing the rules, but a textbook contains explanations expanded by the teachers for the students to understand them and to be extensively trained with the help of various clichés, patterns in all the language modalities to develop and reinforce grammatical skills of reading, listening, speaking, and writing.

The most prominent scholars and many participants stated that alongside the modern cognitive communicative methodology of teaching Russian as a second language, old types of methodologies should not be thrown away as has happened. The audio-visual methodology, the audio-linguistic methodology, the Army methodology (developed in the USA, by the way), and the grammar-translational methodology are being reviewed again. The best effective techniques and approaches are taken from them, developed, updated, and incorporated in teaching Russian as a second language.

Certainly, situational role-plays are widely although reasonably used in teaching adults; however, wide use of games and playing was recommended to be left for teaching kids up to 10-14 years old. For the students aged 15 and higher, a wide use of modern technology is more appropriate, effective, and ensures better results.

The creation of real-world situations for communication in any language modality in a non-target language environment through the use of mass media, the Internet, and teachers-native speakers was considered in a great number of presentations, because a lot of school and university students in many countries are objectively deprived of the appropriate linguistic and cultural environment. Only those students who are taught in Russia have a privilege to attend classes and to live in the Russian-speaking environment, which, in turn, promotes their skills significantly. The issues of the in-country immersion were also widely discussed. However, all the presenters emphasized that any in-country immersion course should be appropriately organized and conducted, because it is not a traveling tour but a special course of studies.

Continuous integration of various language modalities with periodic alternation of a dominating modality continues to be strictly observed. However, the amount of time allotted to develop different language modality skills is varying depending on the difficulty of mastering these various skills.

The issue of Russian culture in teaching Russian as a second language was discussed not only in numerous presentations but also at the separate 4-hour roundtable discussion “Russian Culture in Teaching Russian as a Second Language: What, How, and Why in the Intercultural Education”, in which about 100 representatives from various countries participated. Despite a great variety of opinions, the main agreed conclusions of this discussion were included into the report at the final plenary meeting and approved as the tentative guidelines.

It was agreed that a textbook for the basic course and further advanced courses should become the basis of the two cultures (Russian and native) for a student. Socio-cultural and socio-linguistic competence should be developed during the entire course of teaching Russian as a second language. The culture of the target language training, Russian in particular, should be educational and should become “an intercultural assimilator” designed for intercultural adaptation. Most abstract concepts (e.g., love, beauty, happiness, values, etc.) should be presented and interpreted in the textbooks in two cultures.



The next important topic of discussions was connected with testing language skills in various types of language modalities. If European testing standards and procedures, Russian included, are rather close to the American testing standards and procedures in reading and listening, standards and procedures to test speaking based on the Bologna Convention differ greatly from our (American) Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI 2000). Therefore, probably, a presentation made by the author of this article and dedicated to the issue of the OPI 2000 structure and procedures (The Russian OPI Test as an Integral Part of the System Defining the Skill Level of the Speaking Modality), raised much attention and interest, and the author of this article was asked to repeat this presentation the next day. It is published in the collection of presentations made at the XI International Congress of the International Association of Teachers of Russian Language and Literature.

In conclusion, it is worth stating that the International Association of Teachers of Russian Language and Literature is a non-government organization, the goal of which is to preserve, develop, and spread the Russian language and literature as a part of world culture. Such international congresses, conducted every four years, are very important for all those who work with the language, teaching, in particular. Therefore, attendance of such an event is very useful and effective for the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center instructors' professional development and growth.

## **What Research on Language Learning Tells us about Language Teaching**

**Alaa Elghannam**  
*Continuing Education*

The following is a summary of a two-day workshop titled “What Research on Language Learning Tells us about Language Teaching.” The workshop was held on February 4 and 6 at the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center (DLIFLC) and facilitated by Dr. Patsy Lightbown of Concordia University in Montreal. Lightbown identified the goals of the workshop as follows:

1. Share information from research in second language and cognitive psychology.
2. Discover pedagogical approaches that build on this research.
3. Explore the relevance of these approaches to you and your students.

Lightbown began by discussing the roles of instruction as they relate to learner characteristics. She acknowledged that the nature of instructional intervention depends in part upon the background and characteristics of learners. While admitting that learning styles and preferences are necessarily part of the equation, they were not stressed or discussed in detail in the workshop. The emphasis was basically on the application of second language acquisition research findings in classroom instruction.

The initial discussion identified the general characteristics of DLIFLC students and how that would affect instructional intervention. This was followed by highlighting the time needed to learn and become proficient in a foreign language. It is argued that becoming proficient in a foreign language is a life-long learning experience. The role of classroom intervention and the time spent in a class pales in comparison to the actual time and effort needed to achieve higher levels of foreign language proficiency.

There is also a great difference between the time spent on learning a first language (estimated at 15 thousand hours of exposure to language before school plus an additional 15 thousand hours of school related language learning opportunities) and the time spent in the second language classroom by a typical learner. Research estimates that a typical foreign language program provides less than 1000 hours of instruction spread over several years. Even intensive language programs such as those at DLIFLC provide much less time (estimated at 1890 hours for category IV languages such as Arabic and Korean) than that devoted to learning a first language. Therefore, the central question becomes how do we best distribute study and practice time in the class?

The issue, according to Lightbown, then is to create the best possible learning conditions for the learners in and out of the class. During her workshop, she defined the ideal learning conditions as the greatest amount of time in the greatest variety of contexts using the greatest variety of processing types. She emphasized that instructional intervention must prepare students to continue learning outside the class and must also ensure a variety of conditions and processes for learning and practice. The facilitator stressed that the type of processing, not merely the amount of processing, contributes differentially to successful long-term retention of linguistic data.

In this respect, she added that creating pedagogically sound learning opportunities for students in the foreign language class is indispensable. While not advocating a particular method of instruction, the facilitator discussed research in two particular areas of second language acquisition and cognitive psychology: Spaced practice and feedback, including error correction. She argued that “spaced practice sessions are more effective than a single intense session, even if overall time (of instruction) is held constant.” She also thought that it is particularly beneficial for long-term retention of information, which is consistent with cognitive psychology research findings. She further contended that the spacing effect (spaced practice) is most beneficial for learning and retention of vocabulary, formulaic sequences, explicit rules, and factual or cultural information.

In discussing the issue of feedback, Lightbown indicated that learners get two types of evidence for their language learning: Positive and Negative. The positive evidence refers to language forms that are heard or seen in the input. The negative evidence, on the other hand, refers to information about what is not grammatical in the language. She further added that feedback could encourage retrieval of language forms that learners know, but do not always use. In conclusion of this part, she stressed that learners need both the negative and positive evidence in the learning process since positive evidence provides new data, but it is not effective in eliminating persistent errors – especially those that are shared by most members of a class group. She also pointed out that feedback that encourages learners to retrieve “effortfully” could enhance long-term retention.

In addition to discussing details about the role of feedback and error correction, she made some generalizations about second language acquisition. Lightbown stressed that adults and adolescents can “acquire” a second language; and that there are predictable sequences in the acquisition of a second language. One developmental sequence (grammatical questions) in the second language acquisition of English was discussed in some detail in the workshop, and it was concluded that some structures must be acquired before others can be integrated by the learner of a given foreign language.

While most foreign languages have not been investigated to validate this claim, there was evidence in the few languages that have been investigated, primarily English and a handful of European languages, to suggest a predictable pattern of developmental sequence in acquiring a foreign language. Foreign language teachers may need to be aware of the existence of that pattern so as to be able to account for the ability of their students to acquire certain structures in a given context and adjust their error correction strategies accordingly.

With the above in mind, the relationship between classroom instruction and second language acquisition she explored further. She posed the central question: What is the relationship between instructional intervention and the learning of a foreign language?

The facilitator indicated that traditionally it is presumed that there is a direct relationship between teaching and learning of a second language.

On the other hand, some second language acquisition theorists contend that there is little relationship between the two constructs (teaching and learning), while other researchers believe that there is an indirect relationship. Nevertheless, it was concluded that nearly all teaching techniques can play some role in second language instruction; and that no single instructional intervention is adequate for all skills, learners, or languages. Perhaps further research may shed light on the specific relationship between teaching and learning in a particular context.

The facilitator then suggested Paul Nation's four strands of a balanced course in foreign or second language teaching. She argued that these four elements should be included in any successful foreign language program or classroom instruction:

- meaning-focused input;
- meaning-focused output;
- language-focused learning;
- fluency development.

The meaning-focused input refers to comprehensible input regardless of the skill that is being taught. It also presumes that the presentation of input is pedagogically sound with sufficient meaningful quantities of the target language, whether it is vocabulary, discourse, or structure. The meaning-focused output, on the other hand, simply stresses communication or the learner manifestation of the learned language, whether in speaking or writing. The output should focus on communication of language that is familiar or known to the learner. It is simply a reasonable opportunity to practice what has already been learned.

It is in the context of trying to express meanings that learners come to realize what they can *not* do in the target language. That is, although comprehension may be possible in meaning-focused input – even if the learner does not understand every word and structure – meaning focused output leads learners to “notice the gap” between what they *can* say or write and what they *want* to say or write.

The language-focused learning strand explicitly stresses the salient features of the target language, including phonological, lexical, structural, or discourse features if necessary. Without reasonable knowledge of those features, the learner may not be able to connect form and meaning in order to communicate effectively in the target language. Language features that are focused on in this strand need to be useful for learners when they are engaged in activities in the meaning-focused input and output strands.

Finally, the fluency development component is the element responsible for “getting better (faster and more accurate) at what you can already do (with the language) with effort and/or assistance.” Fluency development refers to increasing the automaticity of language use in all four skills – listening, reading, speaking, and writing. The purpose of fluency development is not merely to allow learners to perform more easily, but also to free cognitive resources for learning new language features.

The workshop was concluded by reviewing some popular ideas about language teaching and exploring the views of participants in this regard. The workshop has fulfilled its objectives by raising the awareness of participants about second language acquisition research findings and how they could be related to classroom practices. Furthermore, the four strands suggested above can provide viable guiding principles for the design of instruction or teaching practices at DLIFLC where the focus is on improving the proficiency level of learners.

While providing meaning-focused input and output may have always been the target in classroom instruction at the Institute, language-focused learning and fluency development may have been ignored. Using the salient features of the target language, lexical, structural, or discourse, in meaningful communicative activities in the classroom or in the development of curriculum may provide the missing link in improving proficiency or even in reaching higher level of proficiency in the target language.

The target language features have always been in the core of the design and development of the online instructional programs, such as GLOSS (Global Language Online Support System) and WTE (Weekly Training Events) for at least the past seven years at the Institute. Meaningful reading and listening activities in those programs have been anchored into specific language features that address particular difficulties facing the learners. Hence, the language-focused learning opportunities are already integrated.

It is high time that similar language focused opportunities are provided in the classroom. Engaging students in meaningful reading and listening activities that focus on a particular language feature will not only provide language-focused learning opportunities, but may eventually help develop the fluency or the automaticity expected from a proficient user of the language, especially if these features are practiced frequently enough.

Salient language features are typically divided among lexicon, structure, and discourse for each proficiency level. Examples of lexical features at the concrete level (1+/2) could be simple word collocations or some set denotative adverbial or prepositional phrases that may represent some difficulty for students. At higher levels, (2+/3) this may be extended to connotative meaning of abstract words and phrases, or common idiomatic expressions.

Discourse features may include relative clauses or similar sentence structures that may pose a difficulty for a student to learn at either the concrete or abstract level. Or, for example, the use of discourse markers in the development of argument at higher levels of instruction. Similar structural features from various foreign languages have been identified (at least for the above-mentioned online programs) and are currently used to develop online learning objects along with lexical and discourse features. The point is that creating learning opportunities using specific language features help focus teaching and learning efforts on the difficulties that students typically face in becoming proficient in the target language.

It is, however, imperative that teachers and students are made aware of the nature and structure of the target language and of the particular difficulties it poses for each level of instruction. To implement this teaching approach, in-service training that makes teachers aware of the importance of identifying the language features or the difficulties that face their students may be necessary. On the other hand, this approach to teaching may carry the promise of increased student motivation since the materials used address their needs and focus on the difficulties they face in learning the target language.

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## **Tenth Annual Faculty Professional Development Conference**

**Teresa Gryminska**

*European and Latin American School*

The Faculty Professional Development Day (FPDD) is an annual conference hosted by the DLI Academic Senate. This year the conference was held on May 23. The conference was originally initiated by its first Chair, Dr. Jim Zhao, and his Senate (then called the Academic Advisory Council or ACC) in the late 1990s. The objectives of the academic body include promoting the work and interest of Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center (DLIFLC) faculty and enhancing the study and teaching of languages together with their cultures.

This year's FPDD conference was a success. As a former Academic Senate Vice-President and long-time member, I remember how much perseverance it takes to organize such a conference. The DLIFLC presenters who contributed their time and resources to make FPDD 2008 one of our most compelling conferences to date certainly deserve our recognition. I would like to congratulate the Academic Senate President Dr. Harouny, the Senate Board, and all the Senate members – some of whom were not only the conference organizers and monitors but also presenters. I would also like to acknowledge the great achievements of the former Academic Senates.

The title of the FPDD was “Culture in Its Broad Range of Contexts.” The goals centered on raising students’ proficiency levels, fostering teachers’ creativity within a broader background of area studies (especially culture), and stimulating technological innovations. This focus encouraged the faculty exchange on professional growth, classroom teaching, and materials development.

I attended sessions that represented a broad range of topics: effective foreign language teaching and culture with technology; the role of culture notes and references; flexible homework practices – iPods and portfolios; and teacher evaluation. I also conducted (with co-presenter) a workshop on task-based instruction and technology. Unfortunately, because of time constraints, I regret I could not attend all of the interesting FPDD sessions.

The keynote lecture, “Linking Language and Culture: Quo vadis?,” was delivered by University of Georgetown professor Heidi Byrnes, who emphasized linking learning inside the classroom with learning possibilities involving culture outside the classroom.

According to Dr. Byrnes, to create a curriculum that is really content-oriented, foreign language educators must go beyond the concept of the “5 Cs” with their thematic content goals of communication, culture, connections, communities, and comparison. They must also go beyond the so-called Standards Project. Dr. Byrnes stressed the significance of considering language as a social semiotic tool and the importance of sociocultural contexts, attitudes, values, ideas, and patterns of social interaction. Dr. Byrnes further highlighted the need for a construct above task-level instruction. In particular, she suggested the possibility of designing an integrated curriculum on the basis of genre-based texts and tasks. She concluded the presentation with a discussion of ways to enhance

the integration of language and culture in language teaching and learning. One such approach involves the development of extended curricula within a genre-based approach to language learning. Dr. Byrnes' session was very informative. However, in my view, it would be beneficial in the future to have practical examples that support the theoretical conclusions.

The opening session of the conference was followed by a series of workshops and presentations that addressed fundamental issues in language instruction. The interactive workshop, "Teacher Evaluation as a Tool for Professional Development," presented by Assistant Provost Dr. Christine Campbell and Dean Ms. Deanna Tovar, gave an overview of teacher evaluation. It was highly informative and provided participants with an opportunity to learn about the latest trends in the DLI teacher evaluation program. The presentation was followed by a lively group discussion about the positive and negative aspects of different teacher evaluation methods. Using a variety of evaluation tools was considered by the audience to be a positive aspect of evaluation which could ensure objectivity. A mid-point review was also believed to be beneficial. Some participants liked the idea of being told by supervisors during their mid-point reviews how exactly they could exceed their standards. Negative aspects included the manner in which some student evaluation form questions (ISQs and ESQs) were formulated. An example was the question that evaluates teachers' knowledge of English. Such an evaluation may seem unfair to teachers who avoid using English and use the target language most of the time in accordance with DLIFLC teaching guidelines. During the discussion, a comment was made regarding some disparity in the way teachers may be evaluated in individual schools. One participant suggested that teacher evaluations should be standardized to a greater extent at the Institute. The presenters concluded the discussion by underscoring the importance of using diverse evaluation tools and announced a future follow-up session on teacher evaluation.

In the workshop on "Task-Based Instruction and Technology," Mrs. Irene Krasner and I (both former Academic Senate members) demonstrated the benefits of using an interactive collection of authentic videotaped materials, corrective feedback, and technology to teach foreign languages and culture. The authentic video materials specifically dealt with two military SCOLA programs – one SCOLA program on hobbies and one on a marketplace. The program on a marketplace was videotaped by Mrs. Krasner during her home country leave in Russia. All the video programs were prepared and demonstrated via the ULEAD TV Capture program, Adobe Audition, PowerPoint and Genesis applications. Each program was followed by a chain of tasks and feedback for correction. We stressed the role of culture in language learning and elevating students' proficiency. We also illustrated the technological aspects of program preparation and showed how recent advances in technology can greatly facilitate a methodology for extending the task-based approach and providing feedback for correction in language teaching, materials development, and area studies. The workshop follow-up questions dealt with specific ways of expanding feedback for correction and using the ULEAD TV Capture program. Some faculty members wanted to know how they could use the latter in their schools. They were advised to contact their respective school administrators and ITOs for assistance with the program installation and instructions. Because of time constraints and the large scope of the materials presented, there will be a further follow-up session in the future.

Since I strongly believe in the importance of culture notes in a foreign language curriculum, I attended a portion of Mrs. Elena Mounts' presentation, "Culture and Language Instruction: Using Notes for Language Learning Facilitation." The presentation

focused on three types of notes: history-related references; lifestyle notes; and language arts notes. Mrs. Mounts showed several interesting notes and references on the target culture. She also gave examples of useful techniques for effectively integrating these notes into a curriculum.

Since homework is a very important element of students' preparation, I attended Ms. Liliane Viviani's presentation, "iPods and Portfolios: Organization and Samples," which described various ways to create and integrate student portfolios. Impressive actual samples of Portuguese and French students' homework portfolios were circulated. The presenter demonstrated the benefits of setting up homework portfolios and iPod assignments. The presentation was followed by a discussion, which included questions about the ways in which iPods can be used for assigning oral homework as well as methods of grading written and oral homework. Mrs. Viviani advocated a global approach to grading homework, enhancing student motivation, and appreciating students' efforts.

In the area of online materials development, GLOSS and Weekly Training Events developers' presentations dealt with samples of higher level online lessons that focus on cultural competence. Since I could not attend the above sessions because of time constraints, I can only present the input I received from Ms. Yana Polyakova, the Academic Senate representative, concerning the GLOSS session, "Beyond the Language: Teaching Socio-Linguistic and Cultural Awareness via On-Line Lessons," by Ms. Natalia Antokhin, Ms. Lily Lunden, Ms. Kueilan Chen, Ms. Si Yen Lee, Ms. Anila Light, Ms. Trina Philpot-Montano, and Mr. Kamaleddine Tabine. Mrs. Polyakova explained that the presentation served as an introduction to GLOSS as a database of language activities geared mainly for self-study. The presenters organized their presentations around sample activities they had chosen from various GLOSS lessons. The examples demonstrated a high level of cultural awareness and successfully linked language and culture. All lessons integrated the four skills and were based on authentic listening and reading materials. Although the lessons are designed for an autonomous learner, they can be used for classroom instruction. Mrs. Polyakova found the presentation to be quite a learning experience for her. She was especially interested in the possibilities of implementing the lessons in the classroom. However, because of time limitations, the presenters could only briefly point to the part of the handout that addressed how to apply GLOSS lessons in the classroom. The main purpose of their presentation was to show a variety of lesson samples from different languages, including Albanian, Arabic, Chinese, Korean, Russian, and Spanish.

In conclusion, this year's FPDD linked foreign language studies to area studies, cultural awareness, raising proficiency levels, and above all, new technology. The range of foreign language and area studies was broader this year, since it included more presentations focusing on culture and technology. For anyone interested in getting more information, I will gladly provide the conference handouts that the presenters offered to participants.



## General Information

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### Correspondence

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### Announcements

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General Information

Calendar of Events\*

2008 Events

- American Association of Teachers of French (AATF)**, 16–19 July, Liège, Belgium. Contact: Jayne Abrate, AATF, Mailcode 4510, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL 62901-4510; (618) 453-5731, Fax (618) 453-5733, Email: [abrate@siu.edu](mailto:abrate@siu.edu) Web: [www.frenchteachers.org](http://www.frenchteachers.org)
- AILA 2008**, 24–29 August, Essen, Germany. Contact: AILA 2008 Conference Office, Julian Sudhoff, Universität Duisburg-Essen, Campus Essen, FB Geisteswissenschaften, Anglistik, Universitätsstraße 12, 45117 Essen, Germany; +49 201-183-2727, Email: [orga-aila-2008@uni-due.de](mailto:orga-aila-2008@uni-due.de) Web: [www.aila2008.org](http://www.aila2008.org)
- EUROCALL**, 3–6 September, Kodolányi University College, Székesfehérvár, Hungary. Contact: Zsuzsanna Angeli, Email: [angeli.zsuzsanna@chello.hu](mailto:angeli.zsuzsanna@chello.hu)
- British Association for Applied Linguistics (BAAL)**, 11–13 September, Swansea University, UK. Contact: Web: [www.baal.org.uk](http://www.baal.org.uk)
- American Translators Association (ATA)**, 5–8 November, Orlando, FL. Contact: ATA, 225 Reinekers Lane, Suite 590, Alexandria, VA 22314; (703) 683-6100, Fax (703) 683-6122, Email: [conference@atanet.org](mailto:conference@atanet.org) Web: [www.atanet.org](http://www.atanet.org)
- African Studies Association (ASA)**, 13–16 November, Chicago, IL. Contact: Kimme Carlos, Annual Meeting Coordinator, Rutgers University, Douglass Campus, 132 George Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901-1400; (732) 932-8173, Fax (732) 932-3394, Email: [asaamc@rci.rutgers.edu](mailto:asaamc@rci.rutgers.edu) Web: [www.africanstudies.org](http://www.africanstudies.org)
- American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL)**, 21–23 November, Orlando, FL. Contact: ACTFL, 700 S. Washington St., Suite 210, Alexandria, VA 22314; (703) 894-2900, Fax (703) 894-2905, Email: [headquarters@actfl.org](mailto:headquarters@actfl.org) Web: [www.actfl.org](http://www.actfl.org)
- American Association of Teachers of German (AATG)**, 21–23 November, Orlando, FL. Contact: AATG, 112 Haddontowne Court #104, Cherry Hill, NJ 08034; (856) 795-5553, Fax (856) 795-9398, Email: [headquarters@aatg.org](mailto:headquarters@aatg.org) Web: [www.aatg.org](http://www.aatg.org)
- American Association of Teachers of Italian (AATI)**, 21–23 November, Orlando, FL. Contact: AATI, Edoardo Lebano, Department of French and Italian, Indiana University, Ballentine 642, Blomington, IN 47405; (812) 855-2508, Fax (812) 855-8877, Email: [elebano@hotmail.com](mailto:elebano@hotmail.com)
- Chinese Language Teachers Association (CLTA)**, 21–23 November, Orlando, FL. Contact: CLTA, Cynthia Ning, Executive Director, 417 Moore Hall, 1890 East-West Road, University of Hawaii, Honolulu, HI 96822; (808) 956-2692, Fax (808) 956-2682, Email: [cyndy@hawaii.edu](mailto:cyndy@hawaii.edu) Web: [clta.osu.edu](http://clta.osu.edu)
- National Network for Early Language Learning (NNELL)**, 21–23 November, Orlando, FL. Contact: Mary Lynn Redmond, NNELL, PO Box 7266, B 201 Tribble Hall, Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, NC 27109; Email: [nnell@wfu.edu](mailto:nnell@wfu.edu) Web: [www.nnell.org](http://www.nnell.org)

\*Courtesy of *The Modern Language Journal* (University of Wisconsin)

**2009 Events**

- International Reading Association (IRA)**, 21–25 February, Phoenix, AZ. Contact: International Reading Association, Headquarters Office, 800 Barksdale Rd., PO Box 8139, Newark, DE 19714-8139; Email: [pubinfo@reading.org](mailto:pubinfo@reading.org) Web: [www.reading.org](http://www.reading.org)
- Southern Conference on Language Teaching (SCOLT)**, 5–7 March, Atlanta, GA. Contact: Lynne McCleendon, Executive Director, SCOLT, 165 Lazy Laurel Chase, Roswell, GA 30076; (770) 992-1256, Fax (770) 992-3464, Email: [lynnemcc@mindspring.com](mailto:lynnemcc@mindspring.com) Web: [scolt.net](http://scolt.net)
- Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages**, 19–21 March, Chicago, IL. Contact: Patrick T. Raven, Executive Director, CSCTFL, PO Box 251, Milwaukee, WI 53201-0251; (414) 405-4645, Fax (414) 276-4650, Email: [CSCTFL@aol.com](mailto:CSCTFL@aol.com) Web: [www.csctfl.org](http://www.csctfl.org)
- Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)**, 25–28 March, Denver, CO. Contact: TESOL, 700 S. Washington Street, Suite 200, Alexandria, VA 22314; (703) 836-0774, Fax (703) 836-7864, Email: [info@tesol.org](mailto:info@tesol.org) Web: [www.tesol.org](http://www.tesol.org)
- Association for Asian Studies (AAS)**, 26–29 March, Chicago, IL. Contact: Association for Asian Studies, Inc., 1021 East Huron Street, Ann Arbor, MI 48104; (734) 665-2490, Fax (734) 665-3801, Web: [www.aasianst.org](http://www.aasianst.org)
- American Educational Research Association (AERA)**, 13–17 April, San Diego, CA. Contact: AERA, 1230 17th St. NW, Washington, DC 20036-3078; (202) 223-9485, Fax (202) 775-1824, Web: [www.aera.net](http://www.aera.net)
- International Pragmatics Association (IPrA)**, 12–17 July, Melbourne, Australia. Contact: Web: [ipra.ua.ac.be/](http://ipra.ua.ac.be/)
- American Translators Association (ATA)**, 28–31 October, New York, NY. Contact: ATA, 225 Reinekers Lane, Suite 590, Alexandria, VA 22314; (703) 683-6100, Fax (703) 683-6122, Email: [conference@atanet.org](mailto:conference@atanet.org) Web: [www.atanet.org](http://www.atanet.org)
- African Studies Association (ASA)**, 19–22 November, New Orleans, LA. Contact: Kimme Carlos, Annual Meeting Coordinator, Rutgers University, Douglass Campus, 132 George Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901-1400; (732) 932-8173, Fax (732) 932-3394, Email: [asaamc@rci.rutgers.edu](mailto:asaamc@rci.rutgers.edu) Web: [www.africanstudies.org](http://www.africanstudies.org)
- American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL)**, 20–22 November, San Diego, CA. Contact: ACTFL, 700 S. Washington St., Suite 210, Alexandria, VA 22314; (703) 894-2900, Fax (703) 894-2905, Email: [headquarters@actfl.org](mailto:headquarters@actfl.org) Web: [www.actfl.org](http://www.actfl.org)
- American Association of Teachers of German (AATG)**, 20–22 November, San Diego, CA. Contact: AATG, 112 Haddontowne Court #104, Cherry Hill, NJ 08034; (856) 795-5553, Fax (856) 795-9398, Email: [headquarters@aatg.org](mailto:headquarters@aatg.org) Web: [www.aatg.org](http://www.aatg.org)
- American Association of Teachers of Italian (AATI)**, 20–22 November, San Diego, CA. Contact: AATI, Edoardo Lebano, Department of French and Italian, Indiana University, Ballentine 642, Blomington, IN 47405; (812) 855-2508, Fax (812) 855-8877, Email: [elebano@hotmail.com](mailto:elebano@hotmail.com)
- Chinese Language Teachers Association (CLTA)**, 20–22 November, San Diego, CA. Contact: CLTA, Cynthia Ning, Executive Director, 417 Moore Hall, 1890 East-West Road, University of Hawaii, Honolulu, HI 96822; (808) 956-2692, Fax (808) 956-2682, Email: [cyndy@hawaii.edu](mailto:cyndy@hawaii.edu) Web: [clta.osu.edu](http://clta.osu.edu)
- National Network for Early Language Learning (NNELL)**, 20–22 November, San Diego, CA. Contact: Mary Lynn Redmond, NNELL, PO Box 7266, B 201 Tribble Hall, Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, NC 27109; Email: [nnell@wfu.edu](mailto:nnell@wfu.edu) Web: [www.nnell.org](http://www.nnell.org)

## Information for Contributors

### Purpose

The purpose of this internal publication is to increase and share professional knowledge among DLIFLC faculty and staff, as well as to promote professional communication within the Defense Foreign Language Program.

The success of *Dialog on Language Instruction* depends on your cooperation and support.

### Submission of Manuscripts

All materials submitted for publication should conform to the guidance in this section. For additional guidance, refer to *Publications Manual of the American Psychological Association* (4th Ed., 1994), available from the American Psychological Association, P. O. Box 2710, Hyattsville, MD 20784.

We encourage you to submit a previously unpublished manuscript, a review, a description of innovative classroom activities, a news item, or even a comment on language instruction. Express your ideas on all aspects of language instruction including teaching, learning, and research. Present your findings on language teaching, learning, classroom strategies and techniques, and applied research.

Please note that *Dialog on Language Instruction* accepts only original manuscripts with the understanding that they have not been submitted for publication elsewhere.

### *Articles*

Manuscripts should not exceed 20 double-spaced pages. Divide your manuscript into the following sections:

- Abstract
  - Introduction
    - Method or Organizing Construct
      - Discussion
        - Conclusion
          - Appendices
            - Notes
              - References
                - Acknowledgments
                  - Author



## **Abstract**

Provide a brief overview of your manuscript in 75 to 100 words. First, identify the topic of your manuscript in one sentence. Next state the purpose and the scope of your manuscript in a couple of sentences. Next name the sources used, for example personal observation, published books and articles. Finally, state your conclusion in the last sentence of the abstract.

## **Introduction**

Describe the purpose of the manuscript. Relate it to the content of the recently, within the last two to three years, published literature. Describe work that had a direct impact on your study. Avoid general references. Cite only pertinent research findings and relevant methodological issues. Provide the logical continuity between previous and present work. Identify the main issues of your study. Point out the implications of your study.

Introduction should not exceed 20 percent of the body of your manuscript.

## **Method or Organizing Construct**

### Method

Describe how you conducted the study. Give a brief synopsis of the method. Next develop the subsections pertaining to the *participants*, the *materials*, and the *procedure*.

*Participants.* Identify the number and types of participants. Specify how they were selected and how many participated in each experiment. Provide major demographic characteristics such as age, sex, geographic location, and institutional affiliation. Identify the number of experiment dropouts and the reasons they did not continue.

*Materials.* Describe briefly the materials used and their function in the experiment.

*Procedure.* Describe each step in the conduct of the research. Include the instructions to the participants, the formation of the groups, and the specific experimental manipulations.

### Organizing Construct

Divide this part into subsections. Focus each subsection on a specific issue identified in the introduction. In each subsection, identify the issue, describe it, and present your finding.

## **Discussion**

Respond to the following questions guide: (1) What I have contributed here? (2) How has my study helped to resolve the original problem? (3) What conclusions and theoretical implications can I draw from my study?

## Conclusion

Summarize your findings.

## References

The list of references should be submitted on a separate page of the manuscript with the centered heading: *References*. The entries should be arranged alphabetically by surnames of authors. The sample list of references below illustrates format for bibliographic entries:

Doe, H., & Burt, M. (2008). Errors and strategies in child second language acquisition. *TESOL Quarterly*, *16*(1), 93-95.

Long, D. P. (2007). *Testing English as a foreign language*. New York: Putnam. 2007.

Reference citations in the text of the manuscript should include the name of the author of the work cited, the date of the work, and when quoting, the page numbers on which the material that is being quoted originally appeared, e.g., (Jones, 2001, pp. 235-238). All works cited in the manuscript must appear in the list of references, and conversely, all works included in the list of references must be cited in the manuscript.

## Notes

They should be used for substantive information only, and they should be numbered serially throughout the manuscript. Subsequently, they all should be listed on a separate page titled *Notes*.

## Faculty Exchange

This section provides an opportunity for faculty to share ideas through brief articles up to two double-spaced pages on innovative classroom practices, such as suggestions on communicative activities, team teaching, use of media and realia, and adaptation of authentic materials. Each sample of a model classroom activity should state the purpose, provide instructions and, if applicable, give supporting texts or illustrations.

## Reviews

Manuscripts should not exceed two double-spaced pages. Reviews of textbooks, scholarly works related to foreign language education, dictionaries, tests, computer software, video tapes, and other non-print materials will be considered for publication. Both positive and negative aspects of the work(s) being considered should be pointed out. The review should give a clear but brief statement of the works contents and a critical assessment of contribution to the profession. Quotations should be kept short. Do not use footnotes. Reviews that are merely descriptive will not be accepted for publication.

## News and Views

Manuscripts should not exceed one double-spaced page. Items related to language instruction such as reports on conferences, official trips, official visitors, special events, new instructional techniques, training aids or materials, research findings, news items, etc., will be considered for publication.

## Specifications for Manuscripts

Manuscripts should double-spaced, with margins of about 1.25 in. on all four sides and should be numbered consecutively. The first page should include only the title and the text.

It is recommended that passages or quotations in foreign languages be glossed or summarized. Authors are advised to prepare a note pertaining to their professional status. An author's name, position, department, school, address (if outside of DLIFLC), and interests would be identified in the note. An example of such a note is presented below:

*Author*

JANE C. DOE, Assistant Professor, Foreign Language Education, University of America, 226 N. Madison St., Madison, WI 55306. Specializations: foreign language acquisition, curriculum studies.

## Specifications for E-mail

Attach original manuscripts to e-mail.

aj@us.army.mil

## Review Process

Each manuscript will be evaluated anonymously by at least two foreign language educators. To assure anonymity, authors should not put their names on submitted manuscripts, but should include a separate document listing the title of the manuscript, author's name, department/division, and telephone number.

Each author will be informed of the evaluation results. In general, a manuscript will be accepted for publication if two anonymous readers recommend acceptance, and, by the same token, manuscripts not recommended by the readers for publication will be rejected. In cases in which one reader recommends acceptance, and the second one, rejection—a third reader will be asked to review the manuscript.

## **Accepted Manuscripts**

A manuscript accepted for publication may be accepted “as is” or may require certain revisions which may target the need to consider other sources, or to elaborate on a certain point; or, finally, may address such minor details as a typo or a lack of citation. In the latter case, the author is asked to revise it and subsequently the editor checks whether the author complied thoroughly with the guidance

## **Rejected Manuscripts**

Manuscripts are rejected due to such major flaws as:

- inappropriate/unsuitable topic for DLIFLC
- lack of purpose
- lack of organization
- poor quality of writing
- lack of applicability to instruction

The editor duly informs the author that the manuscript is unacceptable for publication. Normally this finding ends the revision process.

In some cases, an author whose manuscript was already rejected decides to revise the manuscript thoroughly and to resubmit it for publication. Since the quality of the version is unpredictable, no promises can be issued to the author regarding publication.

## **Correspondence**

Submit your correspondence and manuscripts to *Dialog on Language Instruction*, ATTN: ATFL-AP-AJ (Editor), Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center, Presidio of Monterey, CA 93944-5006.

## *Notes*

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